MAIN QUESTIONS IN RELIGION

WILLARD CHAMBERLAIN SELLECK

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MAIN QUESTIONS IN RELIGION

A Study of Fundamentals

CRANE THEOLOGICAL SCHOOL LECTURES
AND OTHER ESSAYS

BY

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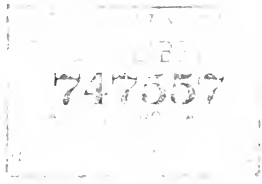

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TO THE MEMORY OF

A DEAR AND BEAUTIFUL DAUGHTER

PREFACE

NO lengthy preface is required for this volume. Its contents must speak for themselves.

The four lectures are printed exactly as they were delivered, at Tufts College, Massachusetts, in May, 1915. They aim to deal candidly, searchingly and constructively with some of the ultimate problems of human life.

The two "other essays" are added because the matters of which they treat are of pressing importance. The purification of Christianity through the elimination of its historic accretions of error is not more than half accomplished yet. The process must be carried much nearer completion before this exalted religion can achieve its rightful and powerful leadership of the modern world. In proportion as this cleansing, rectifying work goes on, Christianity will become more and more the effectual spiritual ally of the great democratic movement, which alone in these dark days appears to hold out the promise of preserving the priceless principle of liberty in the momentous developments impending among the nations. Together a purified Christianity and a spiritualized Democracy will establish the reign of love and freedom, alike in the individual heart and in all social relationships, and thus bring in the era of permanent peace and universal prosperity for which the weary race has waited too long.

WILLARD C. SELLECK.

68 Mendon Road,
Cumberland Hill, R. I.,
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CONTENTS

Lectures

Other Essays

LECTURES

"Before all else, it behoves us to secure the foundations of our spiritual life."—Rudolf Eucken.

MAIN QUESTIONS IN RELIGION

I

WHAT IS THE GREAT REALITY IN RELIGION?

WHEN a distinct and severe shock comes to the human soul, through some great calamity or bereavement, fundamental questions are likely to be raised anew. Secondary matters drop at once into their due subordination, while thought and feeling wrestle with the primary problems of being and the meaning of existence and the order of the universe. Words and phrases lightly uttered in happy hours suddenly acquire a doubtful significance; one is almost startled by a fresh, overpowering sense of the mystery of life; and, without rebellion or positive distrust, he simply bows himself in solemn wonder, and waits for light "more than they that watch for the morning."

At the present moment the world is in the midst of a social cataclysm whose appalling destructiveness staggers the stoutest heart. The frightful conflict which is devastating Europe is like the inundation of a continent. No man can measure the magnitude of the disaster, or in imagination conceive its far-reaching consequences. Inevitably, therefore, it impresses and oppresses every thoughtful person; a mood of unwonted seriousness prevails among all classes; and many are asking what is the relation of this gigantic

catastrophe to the spiritual faith which heretofore has sustained men's hearts. What is essential and substantial in that faith, what is vital and enduring in all our thinking and believing, in all our teaching and preaching, so that we may still speak to one another some honest word of hope and healing?

Such a sober and searching attitude comes at a time when, from other causes, we have been led to look into the heart of things rather than upon their surface. For our age has been an expansive and critical one; the achievements of the nineteenth century immensely broadened and deepened human inquiry in every direction; and the twentieth century finds us trying to ascertain and utilize the net values of all this investigating, revolutionary thinking. As in parliamentary proceedings it often happens that, after the consideration of many side issues, with the adoption or rejection of amendments and counter-amendments, a point is at length reached where the main question is moved and put to vote, so it is in the intellectual deliberations of our time: we have discussed a thousand incidental or collateral interests, pursuing argument and research into every possible ramification; and we are now ready—at least some of us are ready—to try to decide, for ourselves at any rate, some of the main questions of belief and conduct, leaving non-essentials where they belong, on one side. In other words, after all the centuries of theological debate and ecclesiastical strife, and especially after the last hundred years of scientific and philosophical research, it would seem as though it ought to be possible to sift the discussion down to a few principal issues, and with reference to these to find some working theory of life that may approve itself at once to

our clearest understanding, our deepest moral instincts, our purest affections and our holiest aspirations. Such an attainment were surely desirable; and undoubtedly there are thousands of earnest people who, weary of profitless controversy and likewise of skepticism, yet perplexed and bewildered, and often sorrowing and yearning, are really hungry for some vital and valid message touching the most important things of life, whereon they may stay their souls.

If the present writer may hope to offer any fragments of so good and great a message, it will only be because, after thirty years of service in the pastoral ministry of the Christian Church, followed by four years of leisure for reading and reflection, in the midst of which he was called to drink a deep draught from the cup of sorrow, he may claim to express his convictions with serious thoughtfulness, with absolute candor and with a constructive purpose. He sincerely desires to find some fixed stake in all this maddening maze of things to which his own spirit may cling, and to do what he can to help his fellowmen to reach a similar security.

Phillips Brooks defined preaching as the communication of truth through personality. The personality of preacher or teacher is indeed an important factor, but it is like the stained-glass window: the blended hues of the light which it transmits are produced by the vari-colored medium, but the light itself is from without; and always we have to remember that the sunshine is infinitely greater than the window or the soft radiance which it diffuses within. If it is mainly our own personal experience that enables us to "speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen," we must not forget that other men have had other experi-

ences, and that the power and beauty of truth and goodness and love far, far exceed all that can be comprehended in any single human life.

These thoughts bring us naturally to a consideration of the particular question which meets us at the threshold of our study: What is the Great Reality in Religion? For religion is, in the highest degree, both subjective and objective. Our estimate of it is formed by our personal experience (or lack of experience) of it and by our observation of its manifestations in the world around us and behind us. Always it presents these two aspects, and it is easy to magnify either of them at the expense of the other. Therefore, if we would understand it aright, we must look both within and without, and must exercise all our powers of intelligent perception, discrimination, and appreciation; for it is so large and vital an interest, and its influence is so manifold and pervasive, that we can hardly hope to discern its essential nature and its deepest import unless we try to contemplate it both sympathetically and critically.

1. Perhaps it is best to look first within. For it is only as we search our own hearts that we can find a key to other hearts, only as we read our own inner experiences that we can learn the universal language which tells the story of common human aspirations. Just as reason, love, joy and sorrow in ourselves enable us, and alone can enable us, to understand the same things in our fellowmen, so it is in religion: the stirrings of the religious impulse in our own souls, prompting or restraining us, filling us with awe or fear or hope, and leading us to outward acts of devotion or abnegation or high endeavor, interpret to us, and alone can interpret to us, the inspirations,

sacrifices, prayers and penances which, along with many other expressions, reveal the wonderful religious passion that lives in the hearts of all sorts and conditions of men.

And surely we have all had some experience of the quickening power of the religious spirit in the soul, at one time or another, in greater or less degree. We may not have understood it, indeed, but we have felt it; and feeling, we are learning more and more, lies deeper than thought and cannot always be analyzed. Perhaps it was a vivid sense of mystery—the mystery of the world, the mystery of life, the mystery of pain and sorrow and death—that possessed us, even overwhelming and appalling us, that made us cry out after the Inscrutable Power above and around us, or compelled us to bow ourselves in submission and supplication, or bade us lift up our hearts in reverent adoration and trust. Possibly it was a fresh apprehension of the sublimity of Nature—the diamond-studded dome of heaven at night, the resplendent sky by day, the rolling sea, the majestic mountains, the rushing power of the cataract, the stillness of the deep woods, or the quiet beauty of some pastoral scene—that touched us with solemn wonder and longing and praise. Or it may have been some mighty human interest—a profound social agitation, a national crisis, a great reform or a terrible war—that moved and thrilled us and carried us out of ourselves, and thus made us realize that there is something larger and better than ourselves, and led us to invoke a blessing from on high upon the cause which engaged our hearts. Or perhaps it was some more private, personal, inner struggle—some conflict with temptation and sin, some wrestling in prayer, some poignant suffering in remorse and

grief—that awakened us to an altogether new and cleansing and healing realization of the fact that our lives are held in the disciplinary embrace of a Moral Order to which we must submit, and are shot through and through with spiritual forces which we did not originate. And yet, very likely, it was just a sweet and beautiful insight into the love and goodness and gladness of the world, an intuitive perception of an indwelling and all-pervading Benevolence, a profound consciousness of a Holy Spirit within and without, above and around, filling the universe with glory and filling our hearts with ineffable peace,—very likely it was just this simple, vital, mystical experience which made us aware of the Divine Presence and bade us lift up our souls in spontaneous gratitude and consecration.

If in any of these ways, to any extent, we have felt

> "The motion of a hidden fire
> That glows within the breast,"

we know at least a little bit of the meaning of religion, and are thereby prepared to understand some of its workings as we find it among other people.

2. If, now, we turn to look without, we immediately discover that, objectively regarded, religion is a phenomenon which fills a large place in the life of mankind.

First of all, we see its manifestations in our surroundings and among our associates,—in churches, synagogues, temples, shrines and altars; in painting, sculpture and music; in assembled congregations and in ceremonies of worship, in which we join; in sermons, prayers and addresses; in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs; in sacred writings, in holy days, in

processions and pilgrimages, in various institutions and in manifold forms of active benevolence: and as we witness all these expressions of the religious spirit and share their influence, we find our own religious impulses quickened and strengthened, and we perceive that religion is really an immense factor in human affairs.

In the second place, as we extend our observation or reading, we learn that the world is full of products of the religious spirit more or less similar to these; that all nations and tribes, in all stages of culture, appear to have their religious rites, customs and beliefs; that there is, indeed, the widest diversity among these, so that we may properly speak of religion, not as one, but as many, and may, therefore, compare one religion with another; and yet that it is quite plain that these different religions are, after all, only different forms of expression of the one underlying religious spirit or impulse that seems to be universal and natural. Then when the scholars take us further and make a scientific study of all these phenomena, as they have been doing for nearly half a hundred years now,—gathering an enormous amount of information bearing on the subject, testing, sifting and interpreting this; comparing all the principal religions of the world, classifying them and tracing them through history: translating the sacred books and the inscriptions of the most ancient nations, and collating their teachings; digging and delving among the monuments of primitive peoples, or patiently studying their customs, or even sojourning among savage tribes,—enriching our knowledge by their researches and conclusions, we obtain a still larger view of this great human interest which we call religion, and are com-

pelled to acknowledge that it has always been one of the biggest, most vital and most potent forces displayed by our race. The more thoroughly we investigate the matter, the more firmly will this judgment be established.

But now we wish to ascertain more precisely, if we may, the real nature of religion. We want to know, if possible, what is essential and what non-essential in it, what is permanent and what transient. For certainly there is much connected with it that is incidental and temporary, much, indeed, that is erroneous and baneful. Can we separate the wheat from the chaff, the true from the false?

We must remember that religion, broadly viewed, is involved with all the other great interests of life. It is not a disconnected, unrelated, insignificant affair, although it may sometimes seem so; but is rather an integral part of each man's whole mental, moral and social status,—sharing in his general personal attitude and outlook, in his ideas, sentiments, convictions and misgivings regarding many things, and in his own peculiar struggles, joys and sorrows; sharing, too, in the customs and culture of the social group—the family, tribe, nation or church—to which he belongs; and, among advanced peoples, sharing somehow in that indefinable spirit of the age which seems to brood over each stage of civilization. Dr. Daniel G. Brinton, the eminent American ethnologist, writing about the religions of primitive peoples, says:

"No opinion can be more erroneous than the one sometimes advanced that savages are indifferent to their faiths. On the contrary, the rule, with very few exceptions, is that religion absorbs nearly the whole life of a man under primitive conditions. From birth

to death, but especially during adult years, his daily actions are governed by ceremonial laws of the severest, often the most irksome and painful character. He has no independent action or code of conduct, and is a very slave to the conditions which such laws create."

Dr. Brinton approvingly quotes a statement by Professor Granger that "religion in the ancient world comprised every social function," and adds:

"What was true in those ancient days is equally so in this age among savage peoples. Let us take as an example the Dyaks of Borneo. A recent observer describes them as utter slaves to their 'superstitions,' that is, to their religion. 'When they lay out their fields, gather the harvest, go hunting or fishing, contract a marriage, start on an expedition, propose a commercial journey, or anything of importance, they always consult the gods, offer sacrifices, celebrate feasts, study the omens, obtain talismans, and so on, often thus losing the best opportunity for the business itself.' "[1]

These remarks afford a hint of the fact, disclosed by any wide study of religious beliefs and practices, that religion is closely bound up with all the rest of the thinking and doing of mankind, according to the stage or development which any given individual or group or age may have reached.[2]

[1] "Religions of Primitive Peoples," by Daniel G. Brinton, A.M., LL.D., Sc.D., Putnam's, 1897, pp. 37-39.

[2] If we examine ourselves carefully, we shall find that this is true of ourselves; our religion relates itself directly to the total culture of the present generation, insofar as we share it,—to our degree of material advancement, our education, our science and philosophy, our government, our philanthropy, and all our social aspirations. Because these interests are so many and great, and have been expanding so rapidly, our religious ideas and activities are in both a foment and a ferment, a state of unrest and development that is prophetic of something higher and better. If life improves, religion will improve; if religion improves, life will improve. They are mutually involved.

Moreover, we must remember that what may seem crude or false or abominable to one person, generation, tribe, communion or civilization may seem very sacred to another. Until quite recently it was customary for even enlightened Christians to call the peoples of foreign lands, indiscriminately, "heathen," using the word disdainfully or pityingly, and to speak of their religious rites and ceremonies as "outlandish heathenisms" or "diabolical superstitions,"—indeed, those "religions" were actually regarded as the work of the Devil and his imps. But the experience of missionaries among these various peoples during the past century, coupled with the researches of the scholars who have been patiently prosecuting the comparative study of religions, both ancient and modern, both backward and advanced, has taught us to take a larger and more sympathetic view; so that we now see that even the most childish, grotesque or cruel customs of barbarian or savage tribes are to them the consistent expression of their religious ideas and aspirations. We may smile at the Pueblo Indians who will not plant their corn without a religious ceremony,[3] or at the Veddahs of Ceylon who "dance their wild nocturnal dance around a huge arrow stuck in the ground," worshipping it as "the center of their existence";[4] we may revolt at the horrible mutilations, tortures and human sacrifices which were inflicted by the ancient Germans, and were more or less common to the early history of "even the noblest religions";[5] and we of a quiet, thoughtful, spiritual faith may turn away with relief from the elaborate ritualism of a sacerdotal type of Christian-

[3] Dr. Brinton, work quoted, p. 39.
[4] Prof. George B. Foster, "The Function of Religion," p. 112.
[5] Dr. Brinton, pp. 188, 189.

ity: but we must recognize that all these various forms of worship have sprung from some root of sincerity in the human soul, and have subsisted by virtue of the general state of culture (or lack of culture) in which they have found their setting. Conscious deception, fraud, chicanery, imposition may have occasionally played some small part in the religious history of mankind; but this is as nothing in comparison with the great *spirit of sincerity*, whether ignorant or enlightened, which has pervaded all ranks of religious society, from the lowest to the highest, either in ancient or in modern times.

These facts may serve to show that there is no single idea, belief, doctrine, ceremony or custom which is absolutely universal in religion, or which in itself is essential to its nature. To quote again from Dr. Brinton:

"There is no one belief or set of beliefs which constitutes a religion. We are apt to suppose that every creed must teach a belief in a god or gods, in an immortal soul, and in a divine government of the world. . . . No mistake could be greater. The religion which to-day counts the largest number of adherents, Buddhism, rejects every one of these items. . . . Some (religions) believe in souls, but not in gods; while a divine government is a thought rarely present in savage minds. They do not, as a rule, recognize any such principle as that of good and evil, or any doctrine of rewards and punishment hereafter for conduct in the present life. . . . There is, in fact, not any one item in any creed which is accepted by all religions." [6]

In what, then, does the essence of religion consist? Let us see whether a few leading definitions of religion

[6] "Religions of Primitive Peoples," pp. 28, 29.

may throw any light upon this question.

Almost the only definition of religion given in the Bible is that of St. James, who says: "Pure religion and undefiled before our God and Father is this, to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, *and* to keep himself unspotted from the world." [7]

Other great thinkers have given the following definitions, as they are collated and quoted by Mr. Benjamin Kidd.[8]

"*Seneca.*—To know God and imitate Him.

"*Kant.*—Religion consists in recognizing all our duties as Divine commands.

"*Matthew Arnold.*—Religion is morality touched by emotion.

"*Hegel.*—The knowledge acquired by the Finite Spirit of its essence as an Absolute Spirit.

"*Huxley.*—Reverence and love for the Ethical Ideal, and the desire to realize that ideal in life.

"*Froude.*—A sense of responsibility to the Power that made us.

"*Mill.*—The essence of Religion is the strong and earnest direction of the emotions and desires towards an ideal object, recognized as the highest excellence, and as rightly paramount over all selfish objects of desire.

"*Carlyle.*—The thing a man does practically believe; the thing a man does practically lay to heart, and know for certain, concerning his vital relations to this mysterious universe and his duty and destiny therein.

"*Dr. Martineau.*—Religion is a belief in an everlasting God; that is, a Divine mind and will, ruling the

[7] St. James i.27.

[8] "Social Evolution," pp. 89, 90.

Universe, and holding moral relations with mankind."

Farther on Mr. Kidd himself says: "A religion is a form of belief, providing an ultra-rational sanction for that large class of conduct in the individual where his interests and the interests of the social organism are antagonistic, and by which the former are rendered subordinate to the latter in the general interests of the evolution which the race is undergoing." [9]

The Century Dictionary defines religion as "recognition of and allegiance in manner of life to a superhuman power or super-human powers, to whom allegiance and service are regarded as justly due."

Schleiermacher taught that "religion is neither metaphysics nor morality, but arises at the moment that we become conscious of a contact between ourselves and the universe," this contact being a profound "feeling of dependence."

Max Müeller in his "Hibbert Lectures" defined religion as "a mental faculty which independent of, nay, in spite of sense and reason, enables man to apprehend the infinite under different names and under varying disguises"; and he said, "We can hear in all religions a groaning of the spirit, a struggle to conceive the inconceivable, to utter the unutterable, a longing after the Infinite, a love of God." [10]

Finally, Professor Jastrow himself concludes a valuable study of the subject by saying that "religion may be defined as the natural belief in a Power or Powers beyond our control, and upon whom we feel ourselves dependent; which belief and feeling of dependence prompt (1) to organization, (2) to specific acts, and

[9] "Social Evolution," p. 103.

[10] Quoted by Prof. Morris Jastrow, Jun., in "The Study of Religion" (1901), p. 163.

(3) to the regulation of conduct, with a view to establishing favorable relations between ourselves and the Power or Powers in question." [11]

Perhaps these various definitions do not greatly help us—mere definitions of any matter seldom do; but they may serve to bring out a little more clearly the truth which has been slowly emerging all along, namely: that the nature of religion is to be sought, not in external forms, but in the inner workings of the human mind; and that its essence consists in an instinctive feeling after the Divine, an instinctive apprehension of the Divine, an instinctive hunger for the Divine, an instinctive tendency to postulate a Deity. The religiousness of man is universal; the investigations of the scholars may be said to have established this fact beyond peradventure.[12] But the fact of such universality is the most conclusive proof imaginable that religion is perfectly natural to man. This means that all religions spring from the same root in the human soul; that this root is an inalienable instinct implanted in man, not by any second birth, but by his original birth as a spiritual being; and that this instinct is one of the strongest impulses or forces that have animated the race, controlling conduct in all ages as few other influences have been able to do. Let a final quotation from Dr. Brinton confirm this truth,—"The religiosity of man is a part of his psychical being. In the nature and laws of the human mind, in its intellect, sympathies, emotions, and passions, lie the well-springs of all religions, modern or ancient, Christian or heathen. To these we

[11] Work cited, pp. 171, 172.

[12] Dr. Brinton: "The fact is that there has not been a single tribe, no matter how rude, known in history or visited by travelers, which has been shown to be destitute of religion, under some form." Work cited, p. 30; also p. 33.

must refer, by these we must explain, whatever errors, falsehoods, bigotry or cruelty have stained man's creeds and cults; to them we must credit whatever truth, beauty, piety, and love have hallowed and glorified his long search for the perfect and the eternal." [13]

Here, then, we find the central, essential, substantial fact or truth which we have been seeking. *The great reality in religion is the universality, naturalness and permanence of the religious instinct or impulse in the human soul.* In one word we may call it *aspiration;* or it may be called *hunger,* the hunger of the soul for God,—as natural and, in its way, as potent as the hunger of the body for food, or the hunger of the mind for truth, or the hunger of the heart for love. Back of all rites and ceremonies and institutions, beneath all crudities and errors, within all refinements of culture there exists and persists this native tendency of the human spirit to conceive the Divine and to seek some sort of relation thereto or communion therewith. All outward forms of expression may change, but this inner impulse abides, with whatever of indestructibility and promise the personality of such a being as man is may itself possess.

Whence came this religious instinct, this hungering and groping after the Divine, we can no more tell than we can tell the ultimate origin of human nature. Biology, psychology and philosophy may throw light upon the manner of its development, but these partial, tentative explanations serve quite as much to deepen as to remove the mystery of our being,—the mystery, wonder and glory of human life in what we may perhaps call, more justifiably now than ever before, *a living universe.* We know at least that we are here; we are

[13] "Religions of Primitive Peoples," pp. 29, 30.

conscious of our spiritual aptitudes; and, so far as we can see, our religious instinct is as natural as our power of thought, our moral sense or our affectionate disposition. Thus religion becomes a great, spiritual dynamic in our human world,—as real and, within its own sphere, as effective as the force we call gravity in the material realm; indeed it might not be inapt to call religion a kind of spiritual gravitation, binding the finite soul of man to the Infinite Soul of the universe as a planet is bound to its central sun.

Now from this point of view, looking out upon the religious life of mankind, which is as variegated as the flora and fauna of different climes, and trying to interpret it all in the light of what is deepest, purest and highest in ourselves, we may note a few profoundly encouraging facts.

1. We see the remarkable power and fruitfulness of the religious instinct. It moves individuals, classes and masses; it sways the most backward peoples and the most advanced, savage tribes and civilized communities; it prompts to acts of devotion and sacrifice that spring out of fear or credulity as well as out of reverence, gratitude and love; it inspires deeds of fanaticism and deeds of heroism; it sends men on pilgrimages and into wars; it enlists them in hateful persecutions and in splendid philanthropies; it even leads, as it led in New England, to the founding of States and may be the principal factor in shaping their development. What shrines it has established, what altars it has raised, what monuments it has reared, what temples it has erected, what magnificent cathedrals it has builded against the sky, to bear witness to man's haunting sense of the unseen and the eternal! What sacred literatures

it has produced, what beautiful painting and sculpture and music, as its holy spirit has touched with creative influence the genius of earth's most gifted sons! Above all, how many sweet, strong, saintly human lives it has fashioned, sustaining and guiding them through the trials of this world, making them conscious of the Divine Presence and Power as neither learning nor art could do, and sending them hence with their spirits radiant with the light of immortal faith, hope and love! What other force in our human sphere has been one-half so potent and fruitful?

We must guard against limiting our estimate of the power and scope of religion by our own personal experience. We ourselves may not have felt very greatly its quickening influence; we ourselves may never have drunk very deeply from the well-springs of spirituality: but this is no adequate reason for denying that other men, with different thoughts and struggles and relationships, have seen and felt and proved many things which we have never learned. When one reads a volume like the late Professor William James's, "The Varieties of Religious Experience," or books like Harold Begbie's "Twice Born Men," etc., or studies the life-work of such a man as the late General William Booth, the founder of the Salvation Army, or peruses the confessional literature of saints and mystics, one quickly perceives that there have been hosts of people in whom religion has been the one all-dominating force, the one profound, vital and enriching experience, the one open way to an absolute victory of the soul in a world of tumult and conflict. The attainments of such people bear witness to spiritual realities of which the rest of us only obtain occasional glimpses, and may well remind us that "there are more things in heaven and earth than

are dreamed of in" any man's "philosophy."

2. We see the inner or underlying unity, amid all diversities, of the religious spirit of the race. Superficially, indeed, nothing seems to divide men more sharply than do their differences in matters of religion; and yet these relate chiefly to externalities,—to doctrines, creeds, rites, ceremonies, institutions, forms of organization, methods of work, social customs, habits, etc., etc.; and beneath all such there is a common human heart-hunger, a yearning, an aspiration, a sense of need, together with the hope of its divine satisfaction, which makes the whole world kin. It was a word of deep insight which St. Paul spoke to the men of Athens when he declared unto them the invisible God whom they had unwittingly worshiped, and said that He had "made of one every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, having determined *their* appointed seasons, and the bounds of their habitation; *that they should seek God, if haply they might feel after him and find him.*" If there is "one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all," the spiritual unity of the human race is its most vital and profound unity; and the fact that we are understanding this better to-day than ever before, more scientifically and also more sympathetically, affords the highest ground of hope—one might almost say the *only* ground of hope —for a growing sense of universal human brotherhood. If in the immediate future our own form of religion can help mankind to realize a larger measure of this "unity of the spirit in the bond of peace," and can thus promote the further growth of this sense of universal brotherhood, it will prove anew its power to mold life and to serve effectually the highest interests of the race.

3. We see, moreover, the evolutionary progress of

religion through the ages, and learn to judge of its various forms or types or products in the light of the stages of culture to which they belong. Since the idea of development has entered into modern thought so fully as to reconstruct the entire reading of human history, we have been learning that the principle applies to spiritual things as well as to physical. Hence we now conceive that religion itself is a phase of man's development, although it is impossible to tell at what point it first appears along the upward pathway on which he has slowly climbed from the orders of life below him. If we bear in mind that development in this, as in other respects, *is not all one way*,—that there are often lapses, declines, retrogressions; in other words, that there is such a thing as *degeneration* in the spiritual as well as the physical life of man,—if we take due account of this fact, and so correct our easy generalizations, we may still properly say that, viewed as a whole, religion has undergone a vast development in passing from its lowest to its highest stages. Instantly, however, we must remind ourselves that there are still in existence, among the different tribes and races, all the various degrees of advancement, from the crudest to the most refined, which we suppose to have been covered in the case of any given highly-developed type of religion. So there is no single universal religion yet; whether any extant religion is capable of becoming universal is another question.[14]

[14] Dr. George Galloway in his recent volume in the International Theological Library series, entitled "The Philosophy of Religion" (Scribner's, 1914), points out that there have been three main stages in the development of religion, so far as we know enough about it historically to judge. "The first and earliest known to us is Spiritism, the primitive form of belief out of which all higher religion has grown. Then follows Polytheism, the religion of the nation in contrast to the tribe: a stage of religion which was

Now while it is evident that any particular type of religion can be fairly judged only in the light of the conditions under which it appears, the state of backwardness or advancement in culture which forms its matrix, so to speak, we must remember that the true nature of essential religion is to be found upon its highest levels rather than upon its lowest. It is a mistake to suppose that we shall best understand the real character of religion by observing it, or reading about it as others have observed it, among savages or semi-civilized peoples. Not so do we judge of art or science or family life or human government. A tree is known by its fruits rather than by its roots. If we want to understand the full meaning of religion, its most vital power and its greatest blessedness, let us seek it among the noblest and wisest, the sanest and purest men and women. Other things, indeed, will have helped to make them noble and wise, sane and pure; but when religion is developed and refined to such a degree of spiritual perfection as to blend with all these other influences and to find a fit abode in such worthy souls,—yea, even to be, itself, the principal factor in making them what they have become,—we may see

reached on the formation of the larger national States some time before the clear light of history. Finally comes Monotheism, a spiritual faith which goes beyond the limits of the nation, and, in its Christian form, out of the dissolution of the national States of the old world has become a Universal Religion. . . . These three stages of religion mark an ascending scale of life, and therefore of human needs and of the objects which satisfy these needs. A gradual purification and refinement of religious values are visible. The development is from the sensuous to the spiritual, from the desire of outward things to the consciousness that the highest goods are the goods of the soul. Hence, underlying the evolution of religion and working through it, is the growth of self-consciousness, the personal development of man."—Pp. 242, 243.

most clearly its true nature and worth.

In the light of this thought it is gratifying and inspiring to know that religion among ourselves is at present rising to a higher level. It is steadily purifying itself from superstitions and errors in thought; it is becoming more enlightened, nor yet less reverent; it is becoming infused with the ethical and philanthropic spirit, so that a veritable passion for social betterment is everywhere possessing it; and it is reaching out to the uttermost ends of the earth, and to the lowliest and neediest of all lands, with its proffer of truth and love; yea, it even embraces in the scope of its faith and hope and promise of redemption the whole family of mankind "in heaven and on earth." In other words, religion in our time is coming to be rationalized, moralized, spiritualized and vitalized; and thereby it holds out the promise and potency of a better life for our world, to be slowly but surely won in the ages to come.

4. Finally, we may be perfectly confident that the future will have its religion. It may not be exactly like any type of religion which has prevailed in the past; but the instinct will not die out of the human heart which prompts man to aspire and yearn, which makes him feel the solemn mystery and wonder of existence, which creates within him a hunger for truth and goodness and love and holiness, and which impels him to seek some sort of communion with the Unseen Power that enfolds and interpenetrates his own life and that he has learned to call the Living God. Ideas and doctrines may change, as learning and experience may modify them; so may rites and ceremonies, social customs and institutions: but the inner, underlying spirit which makes us all at least dimly aware that we have spiritual aptitudes and sustain spiritual relations, and

thus awakens within us a feeble or a vivid consciousness of our kinship with the Eternal Spirit—"the Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit that we are children of God," [15]—*this* is as imperishable as the human personality of which it is a part.

> "I think man's soul dwells nearer to the east,
> Nearer to morning's fountains than the sun;
> Herself the source whence all tradition sprang,
> Herself at once both labyrinth and clew.
> The miracle fades out of history,
> But faith and wonder and the primal earth
> Are born into the world with every child." [16]

[15] Rom. viii:16.
[16] Lowell, *The Cathedral.*

II

WHAT IS THE VALIDITY OF FAITH?

OUR study thus far has shown that religion in its vital essence is instinctive, universal and very potent in the life of mankind; that therefore we may rightly hold it to be as natural as love or reason or the moral apprehension; and that it thus becomes a living dynamic, as real and significant in the spiritual realm as is gravity or electricity in the material.

If these conclusions are thoroughly tenable, they carry a couple of corollaries which deserve a moment's attention.

1. The basis of all religious inquiry must be human nature. Formerly it was customary to begin a discussion of religious matters by considering the teachings of the Bible and the attributes of God. But of course this method of reasoning assumes the existence of God and the truthfulness, somehow, of the teachings of the Bible; whereas we no longer think it warrantable to take these important postulates for granted, but must first find support for them in the depths of human nature, the one field which yields us our most immediate and sure knowledge. Indeed it is our thought that man himself is the chief revelation of whatever spiritual significance the universe affords; humanity is the principal interpreter of Deity; out of the profound experiences of human life all sacred scriptures are born, how-

ever inspired by the over-brooding and indwelling Spirit. Hence the care and thoroughness with which we must ever prosecute the study of human nature, and the reverence with which we should listen to every message that comes from the inmost recesses of man's soul.

2. We must always distinguish between religion and its manifold products. Religion itself is simply the instinctive attitude of the soul which impels to worship, consists essentially of aspiration, apprehends or suggests the Divine, and, in its higher stages, yearns for communion with the living God; while its products are the various forms in which it expresses itself,—rites, ceremonies, postures, penances, prayers, pilgrimages, altars, shrines, temples and creeds. These differ in different countries, ages and degrees of culture; but the underlying spirit common to them all is ever the same.

This distinction will lead us to separate sharply between religion and theology, which is merely *thoughts about religion.* Religion is the spiritual life of the soul; while theology is the intellectual theory of that life, its philosophical explanation, the orderly account of its relation to God and of God's government of the world. Of course there is a certain close connection between the two, especially among intelligent people; for it is inevitable that a rational being should reflect somewhat upon his emotions, desires and struggles, and thus come to intellectual theories or conclusions regarding them. Yet it is possible for religion to subsist and to be very pure, strong and fruitful without any formal theology at all,—just as it is possible for a man to be morally upright without having thought out any particular theory of ethics; or to love his wife and

children deeply and tenderly without ever dreaming of any such scientific account of the evolution of human affection as Henry Drummond gives in his "Ascent of Man." The fact is that throughout the most of Christian history, especially since the days of Medieval Scholasticism, and still more especially—in Protestant circles—since the rise of Calvinism and the reactions against it, the theological note has been so strong as to dominate the more vital, spiritual interests of religion; whence it has come to pass that multitudes have identified religion with theology,—a true, pure, reverent, aspiring spirit in the heart with a supposedly correct intellectual conception or philosophy of the Divine nature and procedure; whence, unfortunately, it has still further transpired that, when a given theological system—like Calvinism—has broken down, people have inferred that religion was ruined. All such mistakes may be avoided by remembering that religion in its primary essence is an instinctive hunger for God, while theology is merely an intellectual theory about God. Hence it follows that real, spiritual religion may be nourished in the souls of the people even though all our established intellectual formularies go to pieces.

Now we come to inquire as to the nature, function and scope of faith, a term which has always occupied a large place in Christian phraseology. Just what is faith, and what has it to do with religion, and how may the noblest faith be gained? A sound answer to these questions will go a long way toward simplifying some of our most perplexing religious problems.

The word *faith* is synonymous with the word *belief*, the one coming to us from the Latin and the other

from the Anglo-Saxon. Each denotes primarily the assent of the mind to a proposition, statement or thought which it has not absolutely demonstrated. Such assent may be the conclusion of definite processes of reasoning, every step of which may be traced; or it may be partly this and partly also the result of feelings, tendencies and vague intimations that are not entirely susceptible of being logically formulated. In any case one's faith or belief must rest upon some evidence and involve judgment; else it is mere credulity, which is the foundation of superstition and fanaticism: and the higher the order of mind that entertains it—or perhaps it were better to say the more logical that order—the more nearly perfect will be its action in accordance with the evidence. A trained, experienced and honorable jurist becomes almost a machine for weighing evidence and turning out decisions in harmony therewith; but the vast majority of people are so little disciplined in this respect that their beliefs are largely a jumble of a few reasons and many prejudices, involving all sorts of piques, crotchets and guesses; indeed it may be said that popular beliefs generally—touching the weather, the war, politics, religion, what not—consist mainly of mere floating ideas or sayings, current at the time, absorbed from surroundings, or inherited from the past, near or remote.

It is clear, then, that faith or belief may be of every conceivable degree of strength or weakness. You believe the sun will rise to-morrow morning—or will appear to do so—and nothing could shake your confidence; you would risk your life upon it without hesitation. But you may believe that we are going to have a fruitful summer or a severe winter; yet how much

would you risk upon that proposition? You believe that your partner in business, whom you have known intimately for many years, is strictly reliable, and nothing short of overwhelming proof would change your mind; but the plausible stranger who comes to solicit your investment in a gold mine cannot command any such confidence. The fact is, we use the word *faith* or the word *belief* to cover every shade of conviction of which the mind may be conscious, from the feeblest to the strongest; and each particular form or instance of faith or belief must stand upon its own basis, whether the reasons for it can be fully stated or not. We may believe with the utmost assurance that Jesus Christ lived in Palestine, nineteen hundred years ago, and was an exalted Teacher of spiritual truth, because the evidence is sufficient to produce such a conviction in our minds. But we may seriously doubt whether he actually walked upon the sea, or turned water into wine, or raised the dead, simply because the evidence for these alleged occurrences is not adequate, in the face of the established order of Nature, to completely convince us of them. Each case, each item or article in a man's faith, must rest upon its own evidential ground, must stand or fall by itself mainly.

But religious faith, in which we are especially interested, is, when genuine and powerful, something more than a surface opinion. It reaches into the depths of a man's soul, or it springs out of his deepest experiences, and it subsists not only by virtue of reasons but also by virtue of emotions or insights or apprehensions which cannot be set forth in logical array. In other words, life is more than logic, more than intellect; and faith, religious faith peculiarly, is an expression of life, an attitude of one's whole being.

Just as the psychologists are teaching us that a large part of our mentality lies below or beyond the comparatively narrow field of our immediate and clear consciousness, and that a great deal of our real life goes on in this so-called subliminal or subconscious or extra-conscious realm—the realm which still holds our half-forgotten knowledge, and keeps faithful record of many of our wholly forgotten deeds;—so it may be said that the forces which contribute to a man's profound spiritual faith lie out of sight, under ground, like the roots of a flowering and fruitful plant; and he may never be able to explain his faith entirely by giving precise answers to categorical questions. If a good man were asked why he believes in his good wife, in her purity, honesty, unselfishness and love, he would not be able to tell why with absolute exactness and completeness: he believes in her because he knows her and loves her, indeed, but also because of a subtle union subsisting between them which is as indefinable or inexplicable as it is indissoluble—it is a thing of life and not of theory. So, too, a man's religious faith, when vital and potent, is derived from sources other and deeper than the processes of measuring and weighing evidence, however largely these must figure in its formulation; it is a thing of life and not of theory only. More will be said later regarding this truth.

Now the office of faith is to take the place of knowledge where knowledge is not possible, especially in the interest of action.

Strictly speaking, the term *knowledge* is of very limited import: it applies only to those things of which we are positively certain; and these are of two classes, —the things outside of us which we apprehend by sense-perception, and the things which transpire in

the mind itself, of which we are conscious, namely: our thoughts, feelings, purposes, mental perceptions, convictions, aspirations, hopes. Of the former, the things without of which our senses tell us, how little we positively *know!* We see the moon, for instance: but what does the mere sight of that bright orb reveal to us that we can call sure knowledge? Only its brightness and roundness and changing phases. We walk through the fields and see the flowers, or through the woods and note a variety of trees, or through the mountains and valleys and observe different kinds of rock: but unless we are botanists or horticulturists or geologists, how slight is the certain knowledge of those objects which we thus obtain! Even when we examine our states of consciousness, our thoughts, feelings, convictions, desires and purposes, we find them continually changing; and our knowledge of ourselves arising from within ourselves, and considered without relation to others, is exceedingly small.

It is obvious, then, that the term *knowledge* must be enlarged to include a vast amount of information that comes to each of us second hand, and in fact we constantly employ it in this way. When we speak of modern knowledge in general, or of any particular branch of it, like one of the sciences, we allude to an enormous body of fact and truth which the learning of the ages, especially of recent times, has built up. Only the merest fragment of this is actually possessed by any single mind; and with most people half the things that are learned in youth are forgotten by middle life. But what we mean is that this great and precious body of knowledge has been wrought out, shaped and tested; that it exists in books and libraries and museums; that it is available to those who are

qualified to appropriate it; and that in this sense it is common property, the most valuable property of the world, some of whose main features are more or less familiar to hosts of intelligent people. Yet no one knows so well as the profound scholar that even the most complete science of our time is to a considerable extent hypothetical; that its conclusions are subject to revision and re-revision; and that our age, with all its accumulated riches of learning, has only entered the vestibule of the wonderful temple of possible knowledge.

Now into all this enlarged conception of knowledge the element of faith or belief enters to a great extent. It comes to us mostly from others and we take it upon trust. All our information concerning those parts of the world which we have never seen, practically all our historical knowledge, and nine-tenths of all our science—astronomy, geology, chemistry, biology, medicine, and what not—we receive upon the testimony of our fellow men; and we believe it and rest in it and act upon it because we have confidence that *they* know what they are talking about. We have never seen the city of Babylon—indeed ancient Babylon vanished long ago; and we have never read the original Code of Hammurabi—indeed we probably could not read it if we had it before us; yet we go on teaching one another about the place of Babylon in history, and about the significance of that remarkable Code of Hammurabi. Why? Because we believe that the evidence concerning the city and the Code has been sufficient to produce convictions amounting to practical certainty in minds competent to judge of it. In other words, "we walk by faith, not by sight," in these historical matters. We take the testimony of others upon

trust, and they of still others, and the whole process reduces itself to one of confidence in the competence of somebody to weigh evidence and establish either absolute proof or the highest degree of probability. The same thing is true of nearly all our science. The scholar in physics tells us about the ether that fills every nook and corner and cranny of the universe, even permeating the most solid bodies of matter; and we believe in its existence because we believe in him, or in some other scholar who has demonstrated the theory of its existence; and yet this theory is only a working hypothesis, which the scientist adopts because it most completely solves the problems involved, and which therefore has for him so high a degree of probability as to amount to practical certainty. The history of science is the record of continual discovery, hypothetical explanation, verification or correction, restatement, and ever-enlarging horizons; and at every step one mystery merely gives place to a greater mystery.

But if such is the character of our historical and scientific knowledge, much more is it the character of our practical judgments in the conduct of every-day affairs. We "know not what shall be on the morrow": yet we marry and give in marriage, we journey abroad, we engage in business, we make investments, we plan for the future, we take risks of every sort, *in sheer faith, i. e.,* in our *belief* that we shall live and be in health, that safety and prosperity will attend us, that our fellow men can be depended upon, and that the good order of the world will hold together; but every one of these things is uncertain. We do not *know* and we cannot *know* what the immediate future has in store for us, and much less the remote future: yet we fare

on bravely and cheerfully, trying to know as much as possible, forming judgments, weighing evidence, estimating probabilities, and "believing where we cannot prove"; and most of us achieve a reasonable degree of success, and find our faith on the whole justified by results. Not always, alas! is it so justified. The passengers who embarked on the ill-fated *Titanic* undoubtedly did so in faith that they would have a safe voyage; but unfortunately it proved otherwise. Yet millions of travelers do cross the ocean safely, and plan their journeys without much fear in spite of all such terrible disasters; indeed we all go about our daily work, and shape our lives, and meet the inevitable uncertainties, "in faith believing," notwithstanding accidents, failures, miscalculations and miscarriages. Only so can we live at all in such a world as this, in which we *cannot* know the future, but in which we *must* "walk by faith, not by sight." We dwell, each of us, as regards both intellectual and practical matters, within a small sphere of clear intelligence, lighted up by a little bit of positive knowledge, like a house illuminated at night; but outside is the darkness of a vast ignorance and uncertainty, a realm of mystery that seems to deepen as life expands. Into this darkness we are all striving to project the rays of our search-lights a little farther, each day, each year, each generation; but the things we *believe* must ever outnumber the things we absolutely *know* a hundred to one, while perhaps the things to be awaited must outnumber them both still more largely.

"O world, thou choosest not the better part!
It is not wisdom to be only wise,
And on the inward vision close the eyes,
But it is wisdom to believe the heart.
Columbus found a world, and had no chart,

Save one that faith deciphered in the skies;
To trust the soul's invincible surmise
Was all his science and his only art.
Our knowledge is a torch of smoky pine
That lights the pathway but one step ahead,
Across a void of mystery and dread.
Bid, then, the tender light of faith to shine,
By which alone the mortal heart is led
Unto the thinking of the thought divine."

GEORGE SANTAYANA.

From all this it appears that faith, taking the place of knowledge where knowledge is not possible, is a rational attitude of mind. We are not unreasonable beings because we believe some things which cannot be proved, because we act upon convictions when exact demonstrations are out of the question. We are built for action, as an automobile is built for running; it is in action mainly that we develop our powers, and grow, and fill a place of usefulness in the world; and it is certain that the greater part of our activity in life, which naturally looks forward, is based upon opinions, convictions and judgments which are not susceptible of positive proof. The whole business world subsists in confidence between man and man, in faith in the stability and productiveness of Nature; and governments are established, laws enacted, treaties made, and even wars conducted in the belief that certain ends are attainable and justifiable, and that certain measures will prove effective. In all this men are neither fools nor rascals nor bigots, but reasonable beings; for well-grounded faith is not only a rational but a necessary principle in the management of the entire domain of practical, every-day life.

If, then, we ask what faith has to do with religion, the answer is plain: Faith is a working principle, which has reference mainly to action, and which is as

valid in one realm as in another. If it is competent to determine an attitude or a course of conduct in matters of learning and business and all our ordinary social relationships, it is not to be ruled out of court when it comes to testify in behalf of spiritual interests. It is all a question of the nature of the evidence, and of sound reasoning, and of thorough thinking and testing, and of intellectual and moral integrity, and of candor and open-mindedness. The normal action of the human mind simply renders it inevitable that it should trust its own faculties, and trust the testimony of other minds, and trust the continuity of Nature's order; and whether it be in the sphere of moral and religious concerns or in that of material or so called "practical" affairs, it is perfectly reasonable in so doing. This faith becomes effective for conduct, taking the place of knowledge where positive knowledge is not possible, and so fulfills its great function. In the words of William James, "Faith means belief in something concerning which doubt is still theoretically possible; and as the test of belief is willingness to act, one may say that faith is the readiness to act in a cause, the prosperous issue of which is not certified to us in advance." [17]

If these remarks are just, they fairly dispose of the notion, somewhat prevalent and sometimes cynically expressed, that religious faith consists of blind belief, whereas science consists of absolute knowledge. Real belief always rests upon reasons of some sort, and "blind belief" is no belief at all, but mere credulity. The so-called "ages of faith" were largely ages of credulity, superstition, and unquestioning docility; but the ages of true faith, supported by learning and reason, and

[17] "Meaning of Truth," p. 256, quoted by Prof. R. B. Perry.

guided by intelligent, fearless investigation, are only even now broadly opening. We are not to throw the principle of faith overboard, but to understand its proper scope, and use it legitimately, whether in religious inquiry, or in scientific research, or in practical conduct.

We are now prepared to appreciate the power and helpfulness of real faith. It sustains men's flagging spirits, it nerves to effort, and how often it vindicates itself as a dynamic factor in human enterprise! The people who try to do things are the people who *believe* that things can be done. Recall Columbus and his discovery of America,—how he *believed* the earth to be round, and set out to sail around it, when nearly all Europe thought him a poor, deluded mortal: his achievement was as much an act of faith as any in history. Recall Cyrus W. Field and his success, after repeated failures and the loss of large wealth, in laying the Atlantic cable. Think of Lieutenant Peary and his final triumph in reaching the North Pole. Think of the founders of our Republic and of their belief in the principles for which they toiled and suffered. Think of Saint Paul and how his whole apostolic career was inspired by faith. Think of our modern Christian missionaries, from Adoniram Judson to the hosts that to-day are rearing the standard of the Cross in a thousand foreign places. Think of our technical engineers —civil, mechanical, mining, sanitary—who build marvelous bridges, bore tunnels through mountains and under rivers, dig canals like Suez and Panama, swing railroads over chasms or around dizzy heights, construct enormous reservoirs and redeem arid wastes, conquer plague and disease by cleansing the earth, and

so help to make this old world into a new paradise. All these and myriads of others have been people of action because they have been people of both knowledge and faith; they have based their faith upon their knowledge, and have thus *believed* that things could be done, and therefore have attempted and achieved. Always it has been action, action, action which knowledge and faith have served; and both knowledge and faith have found their sufficient recompense in endeavor and accomplishment. Intelligent faith inspires to effort, while doubt freezes the soul and paralyzes the arm. Men who do not believe do not achieve.

But it must be said that religious faith has a quality peculiarly its own and yields a blessing peculiarly rich. This is because religion is so largely an affair of the inner life. Its springs are within, even though its activities be outward. It consists primarily and mainly in an attitude of the soul,—in ideas, thoughts, desires, convictions, aspirations, hopes, purposes and endeavors that are considered profoundly vital and sacred. Thus it subsists among interests which are less tangible, perhaps, than those of science and business and engineering; at any rate they cannot be weighed and measured and appraised by the same standards; but they are not, therefore, any the less real or important —they are simply different. Being essentially spiritual, religion has regard mainly to spiritual influences; it listens for the inner voice, it heeds the inner mandate, it seeks ever the inner satisfactions—"the peace of God which passeth all understanding." Its life is a holy life, whose experiences are not always reducible to rule and regulation and explanation; and it has insights, intimations, promptings, restraints, joys, sorrows, guidances which come we know not how,—which

come, we may believe, because the finite spirit, man, sustains living relations to the Infinite Spirit, God. "There is a spirit in man, and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth him understanding," said young Elihu in his answer to the three friends of Job. This "inspiration" is often the secret and chief source of the real faith that lives, quietly but potently, within a man's soul and shapes his outward conduct. Probably of no other kind of faith than religious faith can this be said. It is peculiarly inward and vital and sacred because such is the very nature of spiritual religion; and therefore it has ranges of apprehension which the intellectual processes of reasoning may not, alone, completely gauge. Saint Paul uttered a profound truth when he said, "The physical man receiveth not the things of the spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them; for they are spiritually discerned." As one who has not an ear for music may not know the delights of music, or as one who has no eye for beauty may not have the judgment and the joy of the artist; so one who has not an awakened or a cultivated spiritual sense may not know the meaning of the inner light, the inner voice, the inner peace,—"the peace of God which passeth all understanding."

But a man who has attained to some measure of such spiritual discernment derives a great blessing from his religious faith. He is "sustained and soothed by an unfaltering trust" when there is no other power to give him courage to try to go on, or to bear up, or to accept what the day brings. He is prompted, restrained and led by his inner faith-sense when there is no other guidance for him. The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews says: "By faith Abraham, when he

was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; *and he went out, not knowing whither he went.*"[18] How often do men go and come, hither and thither, on this enterprise or that, without being able to tell precisely *why* except that they have a secret, inner, indefinable *belief* that they ought, or ought not, to do so and so! It is the faith-sense which belongs to the spiritually-sensitized soul; and it is sometimes the most unerring guidance which a mortal man can have through the mazes of life's bewildering situations. And there is inspiration in genuine faith, the inspiration of spiritual life and power, which heals the infirmities of the soul and, as we are learning anew in these days, may go far toward the healing of the body. For life is always the great builder, and real faith is a form or attitude of life, even the highest life that we know; and who can limit the extent to which its influence may filter down into the lower life? Then what courage is imparted to the minds and hearts of ordinary people when, in times of trial or danger, a strong man stands up amongst them and speaks words of confidence and wisdom! Was it not James A. Garfield, who, on the evening following the assassination of Abraham Lincoln, addressed from a balcony in New York City an excited multitude in the street, and began by saying: "Fellow-citizens, God reigns, and the Government at Washington still lives"; when instantly a tide of comfort and hope and calmness poured itself into the souls of those sorrowing, anxious men and women? What is the orator without faith, whether he be statesman or preacher? What, indeed, is the essence of statesmanship or true preaching but the establishment of a sound and righteous

[18] Heb. xi.8.

faith among the people, individually and corporately, which shall make them stand and labor for everything good and pure and just?" "Thy faith shall make thee whole,"—a faith that is vital, enlightened, profound, sincere and sacred shall cure our personal and social ills as nothing else can ever do. Faith that better things are possible, faith that wise and honest human effort is worth while, faith that the laws of the universe are benevolent and will hold together,—this at least is the downright and dominant conviction that lives somehow in the heart of every man who is trying to do something to help himself and his fellow-men. Without such a faith he is powerless and of course useless.

Now how may so noble a faith be acquired? Well, first of all, by duly realizing that it *is* an acquisition, an attainment, an achievement. It is not something that can be given, but rather something to be won. Lowell said:

> "Freedom and truth and all that these contain
> Drop not like ripened fruit about our feet:
> We climb to them through years of sweat and pain."

So do we climb to any great, vital, worthy faith. We come to it through experience. It grows out of the life; so that the kind of faith we shall have will depend on the kind of life we live. In other words, a noble, spiritual faith is not so much the *beginning* of a good life as it is the *product* thereof. What, then, must be the leading marks of such a life in order that it may yield such a faith?

1. There must be thoughtfulness, open-mindedness, intellectual hospitality, growth in knowledge, understanding and wisdom. While intelligence is not the whole of life, and its limitations must be duly appreciated, yet it is always one of the principal means of

the soul's progressive development. All our powers of perception, reason and judgment, with all the sound learning they can win, must underlie a faith that shall be ample, lofty, and adequate to the needs of the ever-expanding life of the human spirit.

2. There must be sincerity, honesty, conscientiousness, uprightness, moral integrity, purity, virtue,—in one word, that great quality which the Bible calls *righteousness*. He who flouts the moral law in his conduct will soon flout it in his thought. No man can live a corrupt life and long retain a growing faith in goodness. He must himself strive to be just and true who would build up through the years a sublime faith in the Everlasting Righteousness.

3. There must be benevolence, good will, loving-kindness, mercy, compassion, sympathy. For it is in the soil which these qualities continually fertilize that the roots of a generous faith are best nourished. The opposite qualities will starve and ultimately kill all high, ardent, magnanimous confidence in either human or divine things. Live unselfishly and helpfully among your fellow men, and you can scarcely fail to believe somehow in the Eternal Goodness.

4. No less must there be the spirit of reverence, the spirit of holiness, a region of inner calm and deep piety which is the very sanctuary of the soul. Here must be generated the most vital forces that make for a spiritual faith. Only when a man somehow finds God within shall he be likely to discover traces of Him without. It is by seeking Him within, by retiring to that purely private communion with the Infinite Spirit which it is the priceless privilege of the finite spirit to hold, that the most profound and certain assurance is experienced which enables a man, not only to *believe*,

but to *know* that the Divine Presence is the Supreme Reality of life.

5. Finally, there must be a resolute attitude, the resolute will, if faith is to be vigorous. Constituted as we are, situated as we are, in such a world as this, among our kind, we are called, not only to a contemplative life and a speculative life, but even more to an active life,—a life of active goodness, of service, of helpful and creative activity. "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work," said Jesus. It is every man's great prerogative to do likewise, to be a co-laborer together with God; and only when he sets his will resolutely to this purpose, consecrating all his powers to usefulness, resolved to toil on and in his toil rejoice, even when the day grows dark and terror overspreads the land and sadness fills the heart with tears,—only so can one build up within himself, year by year, an invincible faith, that shall hold him steadfast through all storms, and make him a tower of strength for the shelter of other troubled souls.

"O living will that shalt endure
When all that seems shall suffer shock,
Rise in the spiritual rock,
Flow thro' our deeds and make them pure,

That we may lift from out of dust
A voice as unto him that hears,
A cry above the conquer'd years,
To one that with us works, and trust,

With faith that comes of self-control,
The truths that never can be proved
Until we close with all we loved,
And all we flow from, soul in soul." [19]

[19] Tennyson, *In Memoriam,* CXXX.

III

WHAT CAN WE KNOW OF GOD?

HAVING seen what is the intrinsic nature of religion and what is the true validity of faith, we are ready to ask what we can know of God. It is the central and supreme question in our study. Of course the subject is so vast and so enshrouded in mystery that we inevitably experience the greatest difficulty in bringing it within the range of our comprehension. Yet it is best to treat it in as clear and simple a way as possible, avoiding all unnecessary technicality of thought and language. If God is a Reality and not merely a Name, and if all men are somehow related to Him and need to know about Him, there ought to be some means of apprehending Him, or of ascertaining a large and vital measure of truth concerning Him, which an open-minded and sincere soul can understand without profound learning.

At the very outset our problem presents three aspects, which may be indicated by three subordinate questions: What does the idea of God signify? what kind of knowledge is meant when we speak of knowing Him? and how, by what method, by virtue of what faculty or attainment or experience, are we enabled to gain such knowledge? If we can find valid answers to these questions, we shall at least open up a wide field of inquiry and shall discover how exceedingly important are the issues which it contains.

I. For ourselves the idea of God lies at the very cen-

ter of religion; indeed, educated as we Occidentals of the present age have been, it is difficult for us to think of religion without reference to a belief in a deity or in deities—although, as has been previously pointed out, Doctor Brinton reminds us that Buddhism inculcates no such belief. We, however, habitually assume the existence of a Supreme Being, whom we call by a variety of names, derived mostly from the Hebrew and Christian Scriptures. Whether any two of us have exactly the same idea when we speak of this Being, it may be hard to tell, because ideas are seldom, if ever, expressed with absolute precision and completeness; so that we can only judge one another with approximate correctness at best. But so far as a general statement may go in representing the common conception of thoughtful people, it may be fairly said that our religious faith postulates a Supreme Spiritual Personality as the Ultimate Source of all phenomena, whose power, wisdom, goodness and love fill the universe, who creates, sustains, animates and rules all worlds, who is the Author of our being and "the Father of the spirits of all flesh," whose providence is in all human history because He is the Moral Governor of mankind, and whose purposes concerning the children of men have been specially revealed to them in different ways, but preeminently in the life and teaching of Jesus Christ. To be sure, some of these notions would not be accepted by everybody; the last one, for instance, a devout Jew would be obliged to reject: and doubtless there are many, educated in modern science and philosophy, who would admit that they recognize an Inscrutable Power that they sincerely reverence, but that they are unable to call personal in any such anthropomorphic fashion as our language implies.

But these are qualifications which do not greatly affect the essential truth, and the statement as a whole may be allowed to stand as a rough but tolerably accurate expression of the prevalent idea of God forming the background of religious thinking among intelligent people to-day.

No need to trace here the historical development of the rich content of this great, complex conception, though that were a highly profitable task; suffice it to say that such development would be found to run from animism to polytheism, from polytheism to monotheism, from monotheism to Christian paternalism, and from Christian paternalism to those scientific and philosophical constructions which, in our own time, are denoted by the terms Realism, Idealism, Absolutism, etc. The fact is that man's idea of God has changed and grown with his long, slow, painful progress in other respects; many and diverse influences have modified it; and now new and powerful influences are tending to modify it still further. Nevertheless it has persisted, in one form or another, through all the mutations and expansions of the past, increasing rather than diminishing in its significance; and this striking fact affords a fair warrant for expecting that it will continue to hold its place somehow in the enlarging thought of the world, and will still control

"With growing sway the growing life of man."

What difference does it make whether this idea be retained? The world will continue, life will go on, the generations will pass, each individual will play his little part in the drama of existence and quickly disappear; yea, measured on the scale which astronomers employ to gauge magnitudes and durations, our earth

itself will soon enough share the fate of other planets that have frozen up or have coalesced to make some new flaming star: what boots it whether we think that a Supreme Wisdom sits upon the throne of the universe, whether we are sure that an Eternal Love lives in its heart?

Well, there are times when it does not seem to matter much, one way or the other: we are busy with the affairs of life, we are full of energy and ambition, happiness is our daily portion, and every prospect is bright; or perhaps we are living all unworthily, being steeped in sensuality, refined or coarse, stupefied by sin, calloused by selfishness, full of wrath and doubting: in either case, very likely, we do not care a fig for the thought of God, even as we do not imagine that He—if He be at all—can care a fig for us. But by and by a change comes, some shock of doom occurs—the loss of health or wealth, the sorrow of a great bereavement, the ruin of our personal fortunes and hopes by such a calamity as an earthquake or a war, desolating a land or consuming nations—and lo! we are suddenly brought face to face with the tremendous fact that this world is full of tragedy. Then we begin to think more deeply, and to wonder what it all means, and to ask whether there is anything to come when the tragedy ends. We search our own hearts, we listen to our fellow men, we read books, we study science and philosophy, we peer into the vast, deep mystery of the surrounding universe for an answer to our anxious questioning. Is the Infinite Power that we behold everywhere, controlling all worlds, and here on earth making or breaking our human lives,—is this Power personal and paternal, or merely an all-pervading Energy without benevolence or purpose or intelli-

gence? It is not merely a speculative problem; it involves our own destiny and the destiny of those who were dearer to us than life itself, but who have passed beyond our sight; nay, the hope of civilization, the hope for the progress of mankind here upon the earth, is bound up in the final analysis with the character of the Ultimate Reality, however named, that abides forever at the center of things. With the soul full of grief and pain, with tens of thousands of human beings perishing "in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye," as in the Italian earthquake only recently, with European society shaken to its foundations by the most terrific struggle of all history, and with this planet and every form of life upon it doomed to eventual extinction, what ground have we for supposing that our existence has any high and permanent worth, save as it is embraced somehow in the sweep and care of that Almighty Providence whose dominion is from everlasting to everlasting? It is hard to see.

Such is a hint, albeit only a hint, of what the idea of God signifies, and of the difference it makes whether we hold it or not.

II. Now what kind of knowledge is meant when we speak of knowing God?

We have seen that the word *knowledge* is a somewhat elastic term. In its more restricted sense it denotes those things of which we are clearly conscious, contained within the mind itself,—such as ideas, thoughts, feelings, convictions; such as mental, moral, spiritual states, various and ever-changing; such as memories, aspirations, hopes, fears, etc.; or those things which are objective, but of which we are indisputably aware through sense perception,—as when we

say that *we know* that the sun is shining, that the grass is green, that iron is hard and heavy, that some sounds are musical while others are harsh noises, that a rose is fragrant, that sugar is sweet, etc.; or those things which are demonstrable by processes of reasoning which we cannot gainsay, like the propositions of mathematics and the inferences which we are compelled to draw from axiomatic truths. In its broader sense it denotes a vast body of information which comes to most of us "second hand," upon the authority of scholars or experts, the testimony of observers and writers, the common understanding of educated people; information, much of it, which has been slowly built up during ages of study, like nearly all our sciences; or information that is widely diffused by the press, by libraries, schools and learned societies; indeed, the whole great mass of what we call general intelligence or knowledge or learning, consisting of information which rests back somewhere upon some one's "say so," usually with adequate reason, but not invariably.

Into which of these two classes does our possible knowledge of God fall?

There are those who affirm that it falls distinctly within the field of consciousness. They speak as if they thought that we can be as conscious of God as we are of ourselves, or as we are of our passing moods and our permanent convictions. But if this were so, it would seem as though all men would be agreed about it; whereas a few positively deny the existence of God, many more consider that it is impossible to know whether He exists or not, and a multitude of others, while earnestly *believing* in Him, doubt whether it is strictly proper to say that we are actually conscious of Him. At the same time it must be remarked that

the word *consciousness* has come lately to have a larger signification than formerly. The physiological psychologists are showing us that each man's consciousness embraces, not only a central area of great vividness of perception and realization, but a surrounding or an underlying area of diminishing vividness, shading off into dimness and darkness; and that from this shadowy region—called the unconscious, or the subconscious, or the subliminal—there come ideas, apprehensions, insights, suggestions, promptings, inspirations which, in moments of intense experience, flame up into the central area of vivid understanding, like flashes of light; or, without thus manifesting themselves, they may remain hidden in that deep reservoir, and yet may be potent to shape our beliefs, judgments and actions.[20] If these things are so, it may very well be that our apprehension of God is usually of this vague, feeble or submerged character, but that in moments of illumination and exaltation, and in rare souls perhaps continuously, it flames up as a blessed certainty and a living reality in the vivid center of conscious experience. Thus we can understand how a spiritually awakened man—one, for instance, who has felt very deeply the influence of Jesus Christ and has responded to it—may have a religious consciousness which makes him as surely aware of the presence and

[20] "Our studies up to this point have led us to the general conclusion that a large measure of the experiences of life are conserved or deposited in what may be called a storehouse of neuropathic dispositions or residua. *This storehouse is the unconscious.* From this storehouse our conscious processes draw for the material of thought. Further, a large amount and variety of evidence . . . has shown that conserved experiences may function without arising into consciousness, i.e., as a subconscious process." —"The Unconscious," p. 229, by Morton Prince, M.D., LL.D., the Macmillan Co., 1914.

power of God in his life as he is that he loves his fellowmen; while one who has never had any such quickening of the soul, who has never been in any sense "born from above," may have no touch of a similar awareness—and will be likely to have none until something arouses him, when he will exclaim as Jacob did when he awaked out of sleep, "Surely the Lord is in this place, and I knew it not." [21]

But since it is plain that not all men are indubitably conscious of God, but that even the best of witnesses, while sure *that* He is, cannot tell exactly *what* He is, and that they and we and all are forever *seeking* Him, if haply we may feel after Him and find Him, it appears best to say that our possible knowledge of God partakes rather of the character of *belief* than of actual consciousness or of positive demonstration. In other words, it is a composite *conviction,* to which many factors contribute, and possesses so high a degree of probability as to amount to practical certainty while falling short of absolute certainty. Accordingly we are thrown back upon the position taken in the preceding chapter. We there saw that only a small part of what we call knowledge consists of things which can be precisely and conclusively proved, while the greater part consists of things which we believe upon evidence sufficient in amount and quality to produce conviction in minds competent to appreciate it. Upon such conviction we act in all the practical relationships of life, and are reasonable beings in so doing. We are to think, learn, reason, test, prove, as far as possible, in all our study on any and every subject; but then we are compelled to admit that we can know only a very little at best, and are obliged to believe a

[21] Gen. xxviii:16.

thousand things which we cannot demonstrate, and to await many other things which we are not yet prepared either to believe or to deny. So we are forced to "walk by faith, not by sight," if we walk at all,—just as we travel along a country road at night, seeing a little way ahead, and that little sufficing. Because we cannot see the end of the journey from the beginning, shall we refuse to travel altogether?

This position is thoroughly tenable. A man may properly say, "I *believe* in the existence of God, and am prepared to give my reasons for so doing," when he could not truthfully say, "I *know* that God exists, and I can *prove* it, and indeed I am *conscious* of it." One may be conscious of the *thought* of God, and the idea may be very distinct in his mind; he may be conscious of deep *reverence* and earnest *aspiration* with reference to what he feels to be the Divine Presence; and he may be conscious of a firm *conviction* that there is an infinite "Power not ourselves that makes for righteousness," that he conceives as the Soul of the universe and gladly calls the Father in heaven. But all this is purely subjective; and the question is, How, speaking strictly, can one claim to be conscious of the objective reality? To be sure it may be answered that, under our modern conception of the Divine immanence, God is not only an objective reality, but also a living, indwelling Spirit, manifesting Himself in a subjective experience; and that therefore we may rightly say that we are *conscious* of Him, even as we are conscious that we live in Humanity and that Humanity lives in us. But this is an extension of the older meaning of the word *consciousness* which seems somewhat unwarrantable—although it would be sanctioned readily enough by Bergson and others who speak

freely of consciousness in animals and even in plants.[22] Former usage limited the term to the representation of those activities and states of mind which constituted clear, positive intelligence, of which one could be entirely certain: when one was said to be conscious of anything one was perfectly sure of it; there was *no* doubt, *no* misgiving, *no* uncertainty. In such strict sense can it be said that any man is as conscious of God as he is of his own mental processes? Perhaps! but the instances are unquestionably rare; and these rare instances, together with those less vivid or even unconscious experiences, just alluded to, which are nowadays covered by the word *consciousness*, afford rather one of the arguments for *believing* in the existence of God than an absolute *proof* of such existence. In the language of President J. G. Schurman, "I apprehend no little harm has been done by attempting to make our belief in God more certain than it actually is. We have such a belief, and I hold it is legitimate; but it does not belong to that kind of absolutely certain knowledge we are able to have of objects so simple and abstract as the space and numbers of mathematics." [23] Again he says, "I am unable to assign to our belief in God a higher certainty than that possessed by the working hypotheses of science." [24]

Such, then, is the fundamental quality of our knowledge of God; it bears essentially the character of belief; it is a great, composite conviction, produced by many factors, and possesses (for most people at any rate) so high a degree of probability as to amount to practical certainty while falling short of absolute certainty.

[22] See Bergson, "Creative Evolution," pp. 130, 135-6, 143.
[23] "Belief in God," p. 40.
[24] *Ibid.*, p. 43.

III. Now how may this "knowledge" be gained, how may this great conviction be established? By virtue of what faculty or attainment or experience in ourselves can we apprehend God or ascertain important truth concerning Him?

Well, the first thing to be said is that any knowledge of God which we can acquire, any conviction regarding Him which we can establish, must be, at best, extremely meager. We may apprehend Him, but we cannot comprehend Him,—we finite beings cannot put the reach of our thought around the Infinite Being; if we could do so, He would soon cease to be of interest to the ever-expanding soul of man, and would become as the mythical deities of antiquity.

The next thing to be said is that the various names which we apply to God, whether they be Pagan or Hebrew or Christian, whether they smack of religion or science or philosophy, are only so many signs by which we, like little children, seek to designate a Reality that we instinctively recognize as transcendent. We may call him "Jehovah, Jove or Lord," the Eternal, the Almighty or the Living God,—we may characterize Him as the Heavenly Father, the Supreme Ruler, the "Power not ourselves that makes for righteousness," the Universal Energy, the Absolute, or the Great Spirit: but all these and all kindred terms and descriptions are only suggestive symbols, partial and inadequate, to represent our confessedly limited conceptions of the Illimitable and the Inscrutable Being. "The Holy One that inhabiteth eternity," however concealed or revealed, must be so much higher and greater than we can imagine that any name which we may employ to denote Him should be spoken with some degree of reverent reserve.

In the next place it is obvious that, if God is and if He corresponds at all to what we mean by these high appellatives, He must be apprehended in different ways by different minds. Even of the material universe the same thing is true: one person apprehends mainly its law and order, another its beauty, another its terror, and still another its benevolence. How much more must such be the case with the Infinite Spirit that is the Soul of the universe! One person may see or feel chiefly His power and glory, another His justice and severity, another His goodness and love, and still another His forgiving and redeeming grace. All religious literature, preeminently the Bible, is full of this great variety of human thinking about the Divine Nature. He is ever alluded to as "manifesting" Himself now in one way, now in another way, and as having "spoken" to mankind "by divers portions and in divers manners" [25]; but this is only another form of expression to indicate the truth that the children of men, with their various moods and experiences in a changing world, see God through broken lights and shadows, "through a glass, darkly," and not "face to face," and find Him according to their insight and understanding. "With the merciful thou wilt shew thyself merciful, with the upright man thou wilt shew thyself upright. With the pure thou wilt shew thyself pure; and with the froward thou wilt shew thyself unsavory." [26]

What is it in ourselves, then, that enables us to apprehend God at all, however variously or imperfectly, and makes it possible to ascertain any measure of truth about Him? The question is most pertinent; and an analogy may help us to answer it.

[25] Heb., i:1.
[26] II Sam. xxii:26, 27.

We are endowed with five physical senses by means of which we are able to learn something of the physical world lying around us and substantiating itself in our bodies; and it is conceivable that, if we had twice as many senses, we might learn twice as much—so that it is not unreasonable to suppose that infinite wonders and glories are hidden from us, not because they do not exist, but because our powers of apprehension are so limited! Be that as it may, these five physical senses are media or channels or tracts through which the external world conveys its phenomena to us, sending its messages by these various routes to the central Self within. But we may turn the statement around and say that these senses are so many avenues by which the soul goes forth to reach and explore the outward world; or that they are so many windows through which the soul looks out upon the material realm spreading around it. Even so it may be said that there are spiritual avenues through which our minds and hearts go out, as it were, to meet the King of kings; or that there are spiritual windows through which the soul of man looks out upon a psychical world, lying partly within but mainly without. These spiritual avenues or windows may be properly called *spiritual senses*, and there are at least five or six of them, namely: the will, the reason, the moral sense, the æsthetic sense, the affections, and the religious sense. These are not so many departments or compartments of our being, nor yet separate faculties or capacities; but are rather various ways in which the whole Self, receptive and responsive and active, comes into conscious contact with the facts and truths of the psychical world, the spiritual universe, in which it exists and of which it is a living part.

In most men some one of these powers is likely to be dominant. In one man it is the will, in another it is the reason, in another the moral sense, in still another the æsthetic sense, in a fifth it is the affections, and in the sixth the religious susceptibility. Of course in the greatest men there is a happy balance or a harmonious working of all these endowments, and when developed by education or some other rich experience they produce the world's true leaders.

Now it is evident that, if we can know anything at all about God or can ascertain any truth concerning Him, it must be by the exercise of one or more of these powers in ourselves. By virtue of the will in us we postulate a Supreme Will and come to know God as Cause, as Dr. Martineau ably argues;[27] by the power of thought in us we come to know Him as Intelligence, finding the marks of intelligence throughout the universe; by the moral sense in us we apprehend Him as Moral Ruler, and see all human history bearing witness to His righteous government of the world; by the æsthetic sense, the sense of beauty, in ourselves we "behold the King in his beauty"; by the instinct of love in our hearts we apprehend Him as Supreme Love; and by the religious instinct, the spirit of holiness, in us we feel that He is indeed "the Holy One that inhabiteth eternity," and we spontaneously worship Him "in the beauty of holiness." Thus we look out of these various windows, or go out through these various avenues, or pursue these different paths in our seeking God, "if haply" we may "feel after him and find him"; and at the same time we understand that He must be more and greater than we can hope to find in any of these ways,—more and greater than the

[27] See his "Study of Religion," Vol. I.

sum total of our varied apprehensions of Him as Ultimate Cause, Supreme Intelligence, Moral Governor, Perfect Beauty, Eternal Love and the All-Holy One. But we use these expressions and follow these ways because they are the best that are available to us, limited as we are, in our attempt to know God and to tell how we know Him.

We find the thought of God in ourselves. How it comes to be with us, whether by tuition or by intuition, we may not agree; that is to say, whether it has been handed down to us by our ancestors and imparted to us by our associates, or is innate and arises spontaneously within us, we may not be able by philosophy or science to determine positively. While it is undoubtedly true that most men are *taught* the idea of God, and never think to ask themselves how otherwise they could derive it, yet it is equally true that many of the most penetrating minds are sure beyond peradventure that this idea is *given* to them in the same way that self-consciousness is given. One writer expresses the latter truth as follows:

"The only answer we can make, when we ask for its origin, is that our thoughts cannot rise higher than their source; that our Thought of God can have no less an origin than the Infinite, Absolute One; that our consciousness of God must come from God himself, —the Perfect Reality. The very fact that Man thinks God is, if we trust our mental laws for anything, evidence of the Real worth of the Thought. Beyond this fact reasoning fails. *Intuition* must enable the mind to see, if it shall at all see, the offered truth. There is no proof for it any more than there is proof for Self-Consciousness." [28]

[28] Rev. Dr. Clay MacCauley, "Memories and Memorials," p. 416.

But however originating, we find ourselves possessing the thought of God and asking ourselves upon what grounds we may rest our belief in Him. If such belief is a great, complex conviction, to which many factors contribute, what are these factors, what are the evidences which support our faith? If our faith in God is reasonable, it will be worth while to state the principal reasons which we think warrant it.

1. Foremost among these reasons is our own conscious personal existence. This is the center from which we must work outward, the starting point for all our thought-excursions, the bedrock upon which we must lay the foundations of any temple of faith, hope and love that we may seek to build. And we are absolutely sure of this. Whatever doubts may trouble us concerning other things, we have *no* doubt about this; we *know* that we are, that we are here, that we are thinking and loving beings, and that our selfhood persists from day to day. We know, too, that we learn and grow and improve; that we have wonderful memories, insights, inspirations and visions; that we entertain transcendent ideas and cherish

"thoughts sublime that pierce the night like stars."

We are aware also that there are unplumbed depths in our nature, that undeveloped potentialities lie within us, that heights of character to which we have not yet attained are nevertheless within our reach, while intimations of beauty and gladness still awaiting us are ever luring our hearts onward and upward. We know our own virtues and our own faults better than any one else can know them; we know that a profound sense of right and wrong possesses and commands us; we know that a spirit of holy goodness pleads with our souls; and we know that purity and impurity, sin

and guilt, remorse and penitence and pardon are not empty words. Thus our intellectual, moral, spiritual life, yielding its varied experiences and running on from year to year, attests our abiding yet developing personality, which is the one living reality of which we are consciously certain in a world of change and tumult and fathomless mystery.

2. Being thus absolutely sure of our personal existence and our spiritual nature, we turn next to inquire how we have come to be. Here we immediately enter a vast realm of new truth. For the scientific learning of mankind has been so completely made over within the last hundred years that our explanation of man's place in nature is utterly different from that of former times. Modern evolutionary science may be truly said to constitute a great, new, wonderful revelation, as significant in its way for the present age as the Christian revelation was for the Augustan age of the Roman Empire; it has given us literally "new heavens and a new earth"; it has reconstructed natural history and human history; and it has enlarged and enriched by many degrees our understanding of the marvelous processes by which Humanity has been produced. As the story is told, for instance, in the late Professor Henry Drummond's "The Ascent of Man," or in one of the very last of Mr. John Fiske's little books, "Through Nature to God," it is dramatic, impressive and most inspiring. In the light of such a review we see a process of progressive development, reaching through uncounted æons of time, by which the worlds were formed, by which the earth was made ready for the abode of life, by which lower and then higher and still higher organisms were produced wherein life manifested itself, by which at length a race of human beings

appeared, and by which the life of mankind has slowly unfolded, expanded, deepened, and risen to spiritual attainments which crown it all with glory and honor.

It is the function of science primarily to deal with phenomena, to explain methods, to tell *how* the changes of the universe have come to pass. But in pursuing its inquiries touching these things, it finds that the universe is under the reign of law and order, from which caprice and chance are eliminated, and that it is animated by one all-pervading and all-enduring Energy, from which everything proceeds, to which at last everything can be traced up. When the question arises, as it inevitably does, What is the nature of this Energy? the scientific scholars are divided in their answers; one group saying, We do not know, it is impossible to know; another group saying, The only Energy we know anything about, or that is needed to account for the universe, is material; and yet another group saying, The ultimate ground or substance of the universe is Spiritual Life or Divine Energy,—in the words of Mr. Fiske, "The infinite and eternal Power that is manifested in every pulsation of the universe is none other than the living God." [29]

3. The position to which science thus leads, yielding the great conceptions of Unity, Energy, Life and (in the judgment of many scholars) Spirituality as the everlasting Source of phenomena, the Final Reality in the universe, is substantiated by Philosophy. For it is the function of Philosophy to deal with the facts of mind, intelligence, spirituality, as these are disclosed primarily in human life. It studies these in relation to the whole problem of man's existence, and thus deals also with facts lying outside of the human realm, so

[29] "The Idea of God," etc., p. 166.

that it takes the materials and conclusions of science, and builds out of them its systems of truth. Now the facts of mind, intelligence, spirituality, everywhere found in human life, are as real as any other facts in the world; they are as substantial as the facts of the sun, moon and stars, or those of the solid earth; and they may point as clearly in their own way to certain great ends and meanings as do the facts of astronomy or geology or biology. It is simply a question of rightly interpreting or construing them.

And in what direction do these great facts of human life point? Here we have, in ourselves, a first-hand knowledge of them,—mind, intelligence, spirituality; thought, will, conscience; love, benevolence, reverence. What do they signify? Surely they spring out of some source not less than ourselves. Personality in us must originate in something not less than Personality in the universe to which we belong. If that "something" is vastly higher and greater than any personality that we have ever known, well and good! our own personality shall be but a hint or symbol of such a Transcendent Deity; and our poor language will not enable us to do better than to call Him, therefore, the Supreme Spiritual Personality, the Living God.

4. We may take a further step by glancing at the providence of human history. The Power which fills the universe is a Living Power; it manifests itself in our bodies in the physical life which we possess; it wells up in our souls in our conscious personality, in the forms of mind, intelligence, conscience, volition, affection, veneration, aspiration. But it is the very same Power that has been a "Governor among the nations." For a mighty *moral energy* has always stirred the souls of men, and disturbed them and im-

pelled them, or restrained and corrected them, and has thereby so overruled affairs and events and developments as to "make for righteousness" in the long run. By virtue of this moral energy resident in Humanity, evils are slowly outgrown, wrongs are at length recognized and overthrown, rights are finally perceived and established, and an ever-widening range is given to the principles of justice, mercy and benevolence. Thus there is such a thing as moral progress in the history of mankind, tedious and painful though it be; and great moral leaders are raised up, and stupendous events culminate in moral victories—like the uprooting of slavery by our Civil War—and the work of righteousness becomes peace, and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance forever. The very protest which millions of people are making to-day against the frightful wrongs of the world is itself the clearest proof of the depth and strength of this moral energy that lives and grows in the souls of men; and out of protest will come ultimately correction and reconstruction.

Now this moral energy upspringing within each one of us, to which none of us can be wholly oblivious, forever prompting or checking us, now giving its august sanctions to our behavior and now administering its solemn rebuke even to our thought of wrong-doing,—whence is it derived? Surely it is not of our own creating; neither is it altogether begotten by the human society that surrounds us—it is merely "brought forth" thus: but rather we must say that our own moral sentiments, and those of our fellow men around us, expressed and crystallized in the just laws of organized civil society, are a manifestation and an index of the *moral character* of the Government of

the universe; and this is tantamount to saying that that Government is a Divine Government. Thus the moral law written in our hearts becomes perhaps the very deepest and surest witness which is borne to us concerning the immediate presence in our human world and in each human life of the Supreme Power that Doctor Martineau described as "a Divine Mind and Will ruling the universe, and holding moral relations with mankind."

5. Still another element of our faith in God, another method of learning the truth about Him, another means of apprehending Him, is afforded by the experiences of those spiritually sensitized souls that have been awakened and illumined in an unusual way or to an unusual degree. It were as vain to deny that there are such souls as to deny that there are poets and musicians, and it were as foolish to ignore the facts of which they testify as to say that the visions of the poet or the musician are not worth noticing. "The exceptional experiences of exceptional men," as Dean Hodges speaks of them, may be as valid and significant as the ordinary experiences of ordinary men. It is simply a question of verifying and interpreting them. It is no more strange that "the pure in heart" should "see God" than that a mathematical genius should instantly read the sum total of an extensive column of figures. Men and women who are gifted by nature with intuitive perception, having clear and deep insight and delicate feelings, and who perhaps have been chastened by sorrow and tempered by suffering, learning lessons of submission, obedience, trust and love, and living in the spirit of prayer and adoration, may be surely expected to find evidences of the presence

and power of God in the world and in their own lives which coarser people cannot possibly understand. Indeed it is always upon life's higher levels that we naturally look for those experiences which shall make us aware of God. To be sure, we may not entirely escape Him upon life's lower levels, because His providence of law and order still enfolds us and holds us in its grasp and disciplines us; but it is mainly in the upper regions, above the mists and miasmas of evil, where the air is pure and the sunlight is clear, where truth and love and goodness and freedom have opportunity to bear their legitimate sway,—it is mainly there, where the holiest men and women seek constantly to dwell, that the human soul may most confidently hope to hold communion with God. Thus the saints do certainly have something to teach us which we may not otherwise learn, namely: that a deep, vital, inner piety, a simple but sincere love in the heart, an open mind, an obedient will, a reverent and yearning but submissive spirit, "meek and lowly, pure and holy," may bring us into a blessed consciousness of the Divine Presence, so that we shall feel the tides of the Divine Life flowing into us and through us, when nothing else can yield us so great a joy. This is the message of the Christian mystic; yea, it is the most central and essential truth lying at the heart of all spiritual religion; and all our external searchings, whether by science or philosophy or ceremonial observances, will find their culmination and their satisfaction when they lead to this profound yet childlike spiritual attitude. God is not so surely found at the end of a logical syllogism as in a life of faithful devotion to duty in the spirit of reverent gratitude, trust and love.

"O Power, more near my life than life itself
(Or what seems life to us in sense immured),
Even as the roots, shut in the darksome earth,
Share in the tree-top's joyance, and conceive
Of sunshine and wide air and wingèd things
By sympathy of nature, so do I
Have evidence of Thee so far above,
Yet in and of me! Rather Thou the root
Invisibly sustaining, hid in light,
Not darkness, or in darkness made by us.
If sometimes I must hear good men debate
Of other witness of Thyself than Thou,
As if there needed any help of ours
To nurse Thy flickering life, that else must cease,
Blown out, as 'twere a candle, by men's breath,
My soul shall not be taken in their snare,
To change her inward surety for their doubt
Muffled from sight in formal robes of proof:
While she can only feel herself through Thee,
I fear not Thy withdrawal; more I fear,
Seeing, to know Thee not, hoodwinked with dreams
Of signs and wonders, while, unnoticed, Thou,
Walking Thy garden still, commun'st with men,
Missed in the commonplace of miracle." [30]

6. "Canst thou by searching find out God? Canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection?" asks one of the characters in the Book of Job.[31]

Jeremiah represents the Lord as saying, "Then shall ye call upon me, and ye shall go and pray unto me, and I will hearken unto you. And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart." [32]

"No man hath seen God at any time," says the author of the First Epistle of John. "If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us. . . . God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him. He that loveth not,

[30] Lowell, *The Cathedral.*
[31] Job xi.7, Jer. xxix.12, 13.
[32] Jer. xxix.12, 13.

knoweth not God; for God is love. . . . Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit." [33]

To kindred purport are the remarks of St. Paul,—"The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are children of God." [34] "And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father." [35]

Finally, Jesus said, "Blessed are the pure in heart; for they shall see God." [36] "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or I speak of myself." [37]

These expressions register the high-water mark of spiritual truth in the Hebrew and Christian Scriptures. They not only represent man's deep yearning for God, but point out the one sure way of finding Him, namely: the way of a spiritual life, the way of a devout, loving, obedient attitude of mind and heart. Thus they confirm the supreme lesson which we have been slowly learning, that God is to be found and known mainly *within* the human soul rather than without,—a lesson which is finely set forth in Frederick L. Hosmer's beautiful poem:

"Go not, my soul, in search of Him:
Thou wilt not find Him there,—
Or in the depths of shadow dim,
Or heights of upper air.

For not in far-off realms of space
The Spirit hath its throne;
In every heart it findeth place
And waiteth to be known.

[33] I John iv:12, 16, 8, 13.
[34] Rom. viii:16.
[35] Gal. iv:6.
[36] Matt. v:8.
[37] St. John vii:17.

Thought answereth alone to thought,
And soul with soul hath kin;
The outward God he findeth not,
Who finds not God within.

And if the vision come to thee
Revealed by inward sign,
Earth will be full of Deity
And with His glory shine.

Thou shalt not want for company,
Nor pitch thy tent alone;
The indwelling God will go with thee,
And show thee of His own.

Oh gift of gifts, oh grace of grace,
That God should condescend
To make thy heart His dwelling place,
And be thy daily Friend!

Then go not thou in search of Him,
But to thyself repair;
Wait thou within the silence dim,
And thou shalt find Him there."

IV

WHAT SHALL WE BELIEVE ABOUT IMMORTALITY?

EVERY thoughtful person must be interested in the subject of immortality. It is a matter of such direct, personal concern to each human being that it easily commands the earnest attention of the enlightened and sincere, while it cannot be utterly and permanently ignored by any. Even if no other influence draws one to it, the silent processes of nature, —the lapse of time, the progress of life, the waning of physical energy,—must soon bring one face to face with the old question, "If a man die, shall he live again?" Although we may naturally and properly be absorbed mainly in the things which are now and here, yet we quickly discover that the order of life makes the present relate to the future; so that, while we should, indeed, "be not *anxious* for the morrow," we should be prudent enough to take the morrow into some account,—at least to consider whether there shall be any morrow at all. In other words, we cannot disguise the fact that human life and the world containing it are not stationary, but *in process*, belonging to a vast, continuous system of progressive change; so that the ultimate questions, Whence, whither and wherefore? must ever be the transcendently important questions for the mind and heart of man.

Therefore no serious consideration of modern religious problems can omit a study of the evidences for a future life. To be sure, the subject does not concern

religion alone; it is more or less germane to philosophy also, and does not lie entirely beyond the purview of science. Yet the intellectual atmosphere of our time is so full of Christian influences, and Christian teaching has always so definitely implied a belief in immortality, that we can hardly separate the subject from the other great themes of spiritual religion. The truth disclosed by a candid inquiry into the nature of religion, the validity of faith, the being of God, the character of Christ, and the value of the Bible naturally leads us to ask what can be thought about human destiny. The interest awakened by these other lines of research logically culminates in this question as to the final outcome of our existence; and we feel that the encouragement afforded by a fair review of the spiritual development of the race ought to issue in a firmer confidence in personal immortality, or else the whole process must prove disappointing, and the mystery of life will be not only deeper but darker than ever.

At the same time we are disposed to scrutinize more closely than formerly the reasons advanced for the support of such a faith. We are not satisfied to accept a doctrine merely because it is a sacred tradition hoary with age, or because it is sanctioned by a venerable and mighty institution, or because it is taught in the Holy Scriptures, or even because it is intertwined with the dearest affections and hopes of the human heart. All these considerations may create a presumption in its favor, and we shall respect it accordingly; but they do not necessarily establish its truth. Indeed, there is a vague suspicion in many minds that the discoveries of modern science and the critical thinking of recent years have invalidated most of the

arguments heretofore made in behalf of the great belief in a future life. Therefore we want to go over the whole ground again, feeling our way at every step, and examining more thoroughly every position; and especially we want to hear how the case stands in the light of present knowledge.

Such at least is the attitude of earnest minds. Of course those who are not earnest may dismiss it with the flippant assumption that nobody can know anything respecting this matter, and there is no use in thinking much about it anyway; and perhaps many others, like Gallio, "care for none of these things." Absorbed in the life that now is, comfortable and happy, and content, as they think, to take "one world at a time," they are not conscious of any strong desire to live in another state of being. But for those who lift up their eyes to look out upon the universe in solemn wonder, and who reflect upon the nature of man and the deeper meanings of experience; and especially for those whose pathways have been overshadowed by the sorrow of bereavement, and whose love has followed into the darkness the fading vision of a dear life, longing constantly

> ". . . for the touch of a vanished hand,
> And the sound of a voice that is still,"

the subject must have an interest unspeakably sacred and profound. They may be sad, perplexed and doubtful, but they are neither shallow nor insincere; and they wait for the light of indisputable truth as only they can wait and watch who feel that all the true glory of life is involved in this one paramount issue.

It is pertinent to remark here that the belief in immortality, when worthily held, is linked with the very noblest aspirations of the human soul. It may be

held unworthily, indeed, being merely a form of selfishness, the selfish desire for continuance, without reference to purification; and perhaps it is all too frequently held so. But when it is cherished thoughtfully, devoutly, sublimely, with a humble and contrite heart, and yet with a valiant conviction of the eternal supremacy of righteousness, it is bound up, not only with our deepest love, but also with our holiest prayers: we crave immortality not so much for ourselves as for those who are far better than we, and for the sake of the triumph of good over evil in ourselves, in others, in the wide universe. Even if the prospect of our own final extinction did not trouble us, the thought that our dear ones who have left us have entirely perished were almost unbearable. As Dr. George A. Gordon puts it, "A true man does not fear death for himself, but for his friends; it is not his own grave that is dreadful, but the grave of those whom he loves. . . . Not what becomes of us when we die, but what becomes of them when they die is the great question of human love. . . . We so value, not ourselves, but our beloved dead, that we cannot think of them as lost to us, lost to the universe, lost to God." And so Tennyson urges the question,—

> "The faith that of the living whole
> No life shall fail beyond the grave,
> Derives it not from what we have
> The likest God within the soul?" [38]

It is scarcely necessary to dwell upon the prevalence of the belief in a future life, or to inquire much further as to its origin. The broad fact may be granted at once that it has been entertained by the vast majority of mankind, although many notable exceptions have

[38] *In Memoriam*, LIV.

occurred, and a very high type of religion has subsisted without it, as among the Hebrews; and we may concede that it springs spontaneously out of the instinctive feelings, aspirations and convictions of the soul. In the words of James Freeman Clarke, "not only all primitive religions, but all the great ethnic religions, have awakened in man's soul the same belief in a future life. It is the instinct of consciousness which creates this faith. Man, as a conscious personal being, a center of life, feeling himself to be a thinking, feeling, and choosing person, sees no reason why he should cease to exist when his body is dissolved. . . . And the more full of life he is, the less fear of death he has. This is the evidence of those who trust to their instincts. They have faith in immortality because it is natural to believe in it. They are made so." [39]

Of course the significance of a statement like this depends altogether upon the value of human instincts. The question immediately arises whether these are as reliable as the processes of reasoning. Perhaps we cannot determine this point exactly, but we are learning to-day to attach more importance to instinct than was formerly done. We see that the instincts of any given creature are the surest indication of its nature that we can have. The instinct which carries a duck into the water, or an eagle into the air, or a new-born babe to its mother's breast, or a youth and maiden into the marriage relation, or a race into acts of worship is a clearer proof of natural forces and laws, in each instance, than any *a priori* reasoning could afford. Instinct, in fact, is the voice of universal nature speaking in and through the particular case. When a little baby girl fondles and caresses her doll, loving it almost

[39] "Ten Great Religions," Vol. II, p. 336.

as really and strongly as her parents love her, she is simply acting out her natural maternal instinct; and the motherhood of the whole human race may be said to be speaking in and through her in that act. She herself cannot understand it, intellectually, reflectively, scientifically; but older people do because they have learned more fully the meaning of all such things. So it is, doubtless, with us in our instinctive belief in God and immortality: we may not be mature enough yet, we may not have risen high enough in the scale of experience, to comprehend the whole significance of this deep voice of nature speaking in and through us; but by and by, when we shall have advanced further in our development, here or elsewhere, we may perceive that such an instinctive belief or aspiration was as sure an indication of the reality toward which it pointed as the web-foot of the duck is an index of its watery home, or as the motherly affection of the little girl for her doll is a sign of her own latent or potential maternity. Certainly, in the light of evolution, such a consideration is not to be despised; for evolution shows us that back of every man stands the whole human race, and back of the human race lies the unfolding order of the infinite universe.

But granting the prevalence and the prophecy of this instinctive belief in immortality, can we verify it, *i. e.*, can we prove it to the intellect? This is the crucial question. And frankly the answer must be No, if by the term *proof* we mean mathematical demonstration. The utmost that we can do is to establish a very high degree of probability, or to produce the strongest possible conviction, so that one man may believe with all his mind and heart, but still cannot make another believe. Hence he who dogmatizes on the subject,

whether he take his cue from the Scriptures or the doctrinal systems of the theologians or the misgivings of the agnostics, is inexcusable. The only proper attitude is one of candor, open-mindedness and fearlessness, seeking "the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth."

But if the affirmative of the question cannot be incontrovertibly established, neither can the negative. To deny human immortality because we do not *know* that the soul survives the dissolution of the body, would be like saying that there are no more comets in the universe than have been discovered and recorded because we do not know of the existence of such; or it would be like saying that there certainly are no intelligent inhabitants of other worlds than ours because we have no knowledge of them. The difficulty of proving a universal negative is understood by all logicians. Plainly we need to remember our limitations in dealing with this subject. We have only five physical senses through which to apprehend the material world: suppose we had ten: we might then learn twice as much about it as we are now able to do.[40] We have had only a brief personal experience by which to apprehend the realities of the spiritual world: suppose the range of our intellectual, ethical and religious life were doubled in length, depth and intensity: we surely might understand twice as much as we do now of the forces and

[40] Mr. Edison is quoted as having said: "There are lots of things besides radium we do not understand. These five senses of ours are pretty poor detectives. We perceive only a little that comes within the range of our senses. A thing drops below their level and we do not perceive it. Here and there, now and then, some one finds a new thing of which we did not dream the existence. In this room at this minute there are fifty wireless messages going through. Without instruments we cannot detect them."—Dr. Johonnot in *The Universalist Leader,* Mar. 12, 1910.

laws and possibilities of the spiritual universe. So perhaps the relation of the soul to the body, and of both to the cosmical order, may be more fully revealed to us sometime, in the light of increased learning or when we shall have risen out of this present realm, than it is now. These are mere conjectures, to be sure; but they are entirely reasonable, and they prepare us to meet the chief difficulty which the problem of immortality appears to involve, *viz.*, the question whether life is not simply a form or manifestation of material energy, and whether therefore the soul is not wholly dependent upon the body.

It is at this point that scientific doubts come in. The biologist sees life always in connection with some physical organism; he knows nothing of it elsewhere; he dissects every tissue, microscopically examines every cell, analyzes every chemical compound, and never discovers any soul or spirit, in plant, animal or man, that he can gauge by any of his instruments or that remains after the organism is dissolved: therefore it is easy for him to believe that life is merely a form of material energy, a mode of motion, like a flame at the gas-jet, and that what we call the human soul is only a blossom on the tree of our purely physical nature. Moreover, he studies the workings of man's brain, and discovers a series of molecular changes occurring simultaneously with the passing of ideas, thoughts or emotions through the mind; and then he wonders whether the molecular changes may not be the cause, and the only knowable cause, of such ideas, thoughts and emotions. This aspect of the case is well stated by Harry Emerson Fosdick as follows:

"The modern laboratory study of the physical basis of personality most urges this query on us. There is

no longer any doubt about the facts to be interpreted. A continuous layer of gray matter, varying in thickness from one-twelfth to one-eighth of an inch, and folded upon itself 'as one would crumple up a handkerchief,' forms the outer surface of our brains. No thinking is ever done by men without the cooperation of this delicate and highly organized nervous tissue. Each psychical function has some special lobe or convolution in the gray matter, without which the corresponding mental activity is utterly impossible. In many cases the exact location of the sensitive surface, where the special forces of intellectual activity are carried on, is known to the psychologists. They know the area of the brain with which we hear, the area with which we see; they know the lobes by which we move our arms and legs, our lips and tongues and eyes; they know the convolution where the function of speech is carried on and without which abstract thinking is impossible. They can even distinguish the surface with which we hear words from the surface with which we read them. Nothing is clearer than that for every functioning of the minds of men there is a corresponding molecular activity in the gray matter of the brain. The conclusion at first seems inevitable that the mind is absolutely dependent on the physical structure and is inseparable from it." [41]

Now with reference to these facts it is not for one to speak as a scientist who knows little of science; but it is certainly proper to observe that they have been duly considered by many eminent scholars, both scientists and philosophers, thoroughly competent to pass judgment upon them, who have not found in them an insuperable barrier to an earnest faith in immortality.

[41] "The Assurance of Immortality," pp. 77-79 (1914).

Perhaps the words of Professor Tyndall are as weighty as any that have been uttered regarding this problem:

"Granted that a definite thought and a definite molecular action in the brain occur simultaneously, we do not possess the organ, nor, apparently, any rudiment of the organ, which would enable us to pass by a process of reasoning from one phenomenon to the other. They appear together, but we do not know why." "The passage from the physics of the brain to the corresponding facts of consciousness is unthinkable." "The problem of the connection of the body and the soul is as insoluble as it was in the pre-scientific ages." [42] While this language does not commit Professor Tyndall to a belief in immortality, it clearly does not forbid such a belief; and it goes far to warrant the emphatic remark of Mr. John Fiske to the effect that "the materialistic assumption that the life of the soul ends with the life of the body, is perhaps the most colossal instance of baseless assumption that is known to the history of philosophy."

It appears, then, that the essential truth is simply this: As far as our experience goes in this world, the action of the mind and the action of the brain occur together; but no man knows enough of the ultimate nature of either mind or matter to tell *why* it must be so—we only know that it is so. To say that the action of the mind *is produced* by the action of the brain seems like "putting the cart before the horse," or like saying that the instrument which a telegraph operator uses in transmitting a message *produces* the thought which lies in his mind, instead of the thought and the action of his will producing the clicking of the machine. Indeed, here is precisely the vital difference between

[42] Quoted by Washington Gladden in "Burning Questions," p. 142.

the materialistic and the spiritualistic construction of the problem: the former avers that the physical organism produces what we call mind, soul, spirit, as a rose-bush produces the beauty and fragrance of its flowers; while the latter contends that the physical organism is merely the temporary tenement, vehicle and instrument of the living spiritual personality, which may sometime surmount and transcend its earthly embodiment. It is the old question which Socrates debated long ago. Some one "compared man to a harp, and thought his intellectual and moral life the harmony that comes from the vibrating strings. Since, therefore, he is essentially the instrument, which gives being to the music, the music cannot outlast the destruction of the harp. But Socrates insisted that man is neither harp nor harmony; that he is a harper who plays upon the physical strings, dependent upon them for the quality of music he produces, but independent of them for his existence, since the player may leave one instrument and find another." [43]

Seeing thus that we are not necessarily shut out from a view of human nature which makes an intelligent belief in immortality possible, we are entitled to proceed to a consideration of some of the positive reasons which conspire to warrant it. These are numerous, as we should expect them to be if the faith were thoroughly tenable; we should look to see many indications of its validity, rather than a few, as in all the sound generalizations of human thought,—like, for example, the stupendous theory of evolution. The spiritual temple of our hopes does not stand upon a single cornerstone, however precious, but upon a broad, firm, symmetrical foundation, composed of many stones

[43] "The Assurance of Immortality," p. 38.

brought from diverse quarries,—from science, philosophy, religion, history, the teachings of prophets, saints and sages, and the inmost depths of the common human heart. Some of the evidences adduced for the doctrine of our continued existence are direct and cogent, while others are collateral and corroborative; and it is in their correspondence and combination that we feel their full force.

1. Let us begin with the familiar fact that the soul is *not* always so completely dependent upon the body as we sometimes assume. For we know that, frequently, a powerful intellect may dwell in a very frail physical organism,—like that of Elizabeth Barrett Browning, for instance. We know, too, that a body may gradually fail and be feeble for a long time, while yet the soul retains apparently all its vigor. Why then should its activity and potency cease utterly upon the further deterioration of its already crumbling house of clay? Furthermore we know that the body is continually changing, while the mind never loses its identity; I am the same person, and know myself to be such, that I was twenty years ago, notwithstanding every particle of matter in my body is probably different: why then may I not persist in my personality, preserving my individuality intact, in and through that change which consists in merely dropping a worn-out, useless mass of matter? [44]

[44] Bergson points out that it is entirely conceivable that life might have subsisted on earth, and may subsist elsewhere in the universe, under very different chemical conditions from those which our bodies exhibit. He says: "It was not necessary that life should fix its choice mainly upon the carbon of carbonic acid. What was essential for it was to store solar energy; but, instead of asking the sun to separate, for instance, atoms of oxygen and carbon, it might (theoretically at least, and, apart from practical difficulties possibly insurmountable) have put forth other chemical

2. When we turn from the body to contemplate the mind alone, studying its workings and measuring its wonderful powers and capacities, we see that it is projected on a vast scale and is evidently *fitted*, intrinsically, for a higher realm than this material world. Its thoughts run out far beyond the body and all its concerns; they sweep the boundless regions of space and trace the stars in their courses; they penetrate into the depths of the earth and learn the secrets of its history; they disentomb the buried nations and read anew the forgotten story of their greatness; they analyze the operations of the mind itself, divine its possibilities, and prove its kinship with the very Spirit of the universe. There is apparently no limit to its potential grasp and growth; knowledge may increase indefinitely; it is capable of eternal progress, so far as we can see. The same is true of the moral and spiritual life: it is susceptible of unlimited development,

elements, which would then have had to be associated or dissociated by entirely different physical means. And if the element characteristic of the substances that supply energy to the organism had been other than carbon, the element characteristic of the plastic substances would probably have been other than nitrogen, and the chemistry of living bodies would then have been radically different from what it is. The result would have been living forms without any analogy to those we know, whose anatomy would have been different, whose physiology also would have been different. . . . It is therefore probable that life goes on in other planets, in other solar systems also, under forms of which we have no idea, in physical conditions to which it seems to us, from the point of view of our physiology, to be absolutely opposed. If its essential aim is to catch up usable energy in order to expend it in explosive actions, it probably chooses, in each solar system and on each planet, as it does on the earth, the fittest means to get this result in the circumstances with which it is confronted. This is at least what reasoning by analogy leads to, and we use analogy the wrong way when we declare life to be impossible wherever the circumstances with which it is confronted are other than those on earth."—"Creative Evolution," pp. 255-256.

provided opportunity be granted it for struggle and achievement.

Now such fitness argues proper scope for the realization of inherent possibilities. If you should find in a zoological garden a noble bird, with mighty wings and powerful talons and vicious beak and piercing eye, with a majestic stride and look, and having strength enough to kill and carry off a young wolf, you would say, This is not the only home for such a splendid creature; its true habitat is the craggy mountains and the clouds of heaven: it is none other than the proud eagle—give him his freedom and let him soar to his native heights! You feel that it would be almost a crime to keep him confined in a cage when he is so clearly fitted for a grander career. So it is with the human soul. If there is no upper air into which it may be sometime released, we can scarcely solve the puzzle of its marvelous aspirations, affinities and potencies. Surely it seems reasonable to believe that it is made for the spiritual heavens, and that the spiritual heavens await it!

3. Again, this great faith is confirmed, in a two-fold way, by the teachings of evolution. To be sure, this is an over-worked term, but in the present instance its employment is justifiable. Evolution, certainly, has thrown more light upon the problem of man's existence and destiny than aught else save the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

And the first word of evolution touching the present subject reminds us that the universe has already produced man. Here he is, such as he is, with all his powers, capacities and tendencies, and we know him to be spiritual in his essential character. His existence here is the one great miracle. That in the midst of this ma-

terial scene there should appear such a phenomenon as the human mind, with its powers of thought, emotion and volition, its capacities for knowledge, goodness and happiness, and its possibilities for growth in all these respects, impresses one as the supreme marvel of the world. The persistence of this mentality, this human individuality, through and despite the dissolution of its physical organism, does not seem half so strange as that it should ever have manifested itself in such an organism. Evolution warrants us in holding to the continuity of Nature's creative principle, and to the onward and upward trend of development.

"A soul shall draw from out the vast,
And strike his being into bounds,

And, moved through life of lower phase,
Result in man, be born and think,
And act and love, a closer link
Betwixt us and the crowning race

Of those that, eye to eye, shall look
On knowledge."

The second word of evolution respecting this problem reminds us of the appalling waste of spiritual energy that must occur if the individual be not somehow immortal. What is so precious as the mind of man and its products, knowledge, love, goodness, beauty, joy? What but these makes the world worth anything to us? And if all the spiritual energy throbbing for ages through human lives, and building the fabric of civilization, and transmuting the dust of the earth into learning and affection and holiness and happiness, is as ephemeral as the fragrance of a rose, and, though in the individual soul is

". . . strong as the archangel's call"

up to the very moment of death, is yet to perish ab-

solutely in the next moment, dissipating and extinguishing itself like a skyrocket,—then surely it seems the most wanton, prodigal waste of priceless power in all the economy of Nature. It is not enough to say that the energy of the individual is transmitted to posterity; for much of the highest and richest form of such energy is often acquired after the individual has begotten his offspring, or may be possessed by one who never begets any children—like Bishop Phillips Brooks, for example. Can it be that Nature thus throws away her highest gains, and renders man himself inferior in perdurance to the works of his own hand and mind?

Richard Watson Gilder listened, one night in midsummer, to a phonographic reproduction of the music of "Otello" sung by "a wonderful tenor" who had been "long dead." In describing it he says:

"His soul it was that seized my soul, through his voice, which was as the very voice of sorrow;

"And then I thought: If man, by science and searching, can build a cunning instrument that takes over and keeps, beyond the term of human existence, the essence and flower of a man's art;

"If he can re-create that most individual attribute, his articulate and musical voice, and thus the very art and passion which that voice conveys,

"Why may not the Supreme Artificer, when the human body is utterly dissolved and dispersed, recover and keep forever, in some new and delicate structure, the living soul itself?" [45]

If all the talent, culture and personal worth embodied in the fifteen hundred lives that were lost with

[45] Gilder's "Complete Poems," p. 390; see also his noble poem, "Identity," p. 373.

the *Titanic*, or the other fifteen hundred that have just gone down with the *Lusitania*, or the tens of thousands recently slain on European battlefields have ceased utterly and absolutely to exist, then it is impossible to see how there is anything in the spiritual realm corresponding to what the scientists call the conservation of energy in the physical domain.

4. Another reason for believing in immortality is in the fact that it affords a satisfactory explanation of death. Death is the counterpart of birth; and if it is a good thing to be born, it is a good thing to die, when the right time comes—undoubtedly it is not good to die before the right time comes, any more than it is good to be prematurely born; so that suicide is a criminal spiritual abortion. But both birth and death according to nature are good, or else the order of the universe mocks us. Of what use, to what purpose, that so many myriads of millions of human beings should swarm into this world, and through strife and pain achieve some excellence that seems worthy of it all, only to go out in a night of impenetrable gloom? The only adequate explanation and justification of the whole stupendous process are to be found in the presumption of a continued existence, somehow, for each individual soul, wherein what has been gained at such frightful cost shall be conserved and carried forward. Death thus becomes, not extinction, but transition; not the destruction of life, but its transplantation. Death then is really only another birth,—a great, new, wonderful birth, but as natural as our first birth, and perhaps no more mysterious. As Henry Ward Beecher remarked, "we go to the grave of a friend saying, 'A man has died'; angels gather about him above saying, 'A man is born!'" Surely such a faith solves the prob-

lem of death so as not to belie the great principle of beneficence which makes the order of Nature both reasonable and just.

5. A kindred thought is that immortality provides opportunity for completing the spiritual development begun in the earthly life. We are all painfully aware of incompleteness, in ourselves and in others. Even the best of men are sure that they have not accomplished one-half of the work and growth of which they feel themselves capable: and the worst of men, however perverted and distorted, undoubtedly have some germs of goodness within them which conceivably might be developed under favorable circumstances and with time enough. The view that this world is only a nursery for the fields of paradise, a primary school in the great university of life, a single stage in the vast process of development for each human soul,—this view meets the demand of our innate sense of justice for time and scope for the educative, disciplinary processes of Divine Providence to work out their legitimate results for each and all. Our present life is not adequate to this end; indeed for uncounted multitudes the great, blessed task is scarcely begun here. But the story of each human life is a continued story, and is not finished when the end of the first chapter is reached. The theater isn't out when the curtain falls on the first act: the play is to go on: and ere it is completed we shall perhaps see that it is not a tragedy, but a grand drama issuing in the triumph of truth, virtue, love and joy!

Nothing less than such a conception can stay our weary hearts, can make us patient to bear up and toil on amid the sin and sorrow of the world, can give us hope that the disappointed and hindered lives that have

gone forth from us with their noble desires and capacities unfulfilled shall in other scenes attain to the fruition of their ardent longings. And when we consider those that have been cramped, distorted, weakened and almost ruined by the destructive influences of wrongdoing, what can relieve the dark picture except the belief that they are still in the care and keeping of a Spiritual Providence that forever loves and chastens and purifies and redeems? An exalted faith in God as "the Father of the spirits of all flesh" is the eternal ground of our hope for each and every human soul,—the faith and hope

> "That nothing walks with aimless feet;
> That not one life shall be destroyed,
> Or cast as rubbish to the void,
> When God hath made the pile complete."

5. There are many other considerations which favor a belief in immortality, but limitations of space forbid more than the briefest mention of two or three of them.

(1) The teaching of Jesus Christ concerning the subject, though extremely simple, is so weighty because of what he was that it is entitled to the very highest esteem; and for those who really understand and appreciate him it may be said that, even if all other evidences for their faith were to fail, they would still believe in a future life because he believed in it. As a little child who cannot read a word may know that its parent or teacher sees a meaning in the printed page, so we who cannot understand all our own experiences may be sure that Jesus Christ had insight to perceive a higher, diviner significance in human life, and a more glorious issue of suffering and death, than we have ever dreamed of. Therefore we can echo the wise words of Dr. Theodore T. Munger:

"When the clearest eyes that ever looked on this world and into the heavens, and the keenest judgment that ever weighed human life, and the purest heart that ever throbbed with human sympathy, tells me, especially if he tells it by assumption, that man is immortal, I repose on his teaching in perfect trust."

(2) The well-attested phenomena of true spiritualism and the facts patiently developed by the Society for Psychical Research afford some confirmatory evidence for immortality which is not lightly to be regarded. After making due allowance for the self-deception, fraud and chicanery that have infested this border-land, and for the inevitable cloud of uncertainty that must hover over it, there remains a large amount of evidence which it seems impossible to construe aright except by postulating the immortality of the soul and some contact or communication between disembodied and embodied spirits. While such evidence may not be sufficient to establish independently the great faith, it possesses a supplementary and corroborative character which gives it considerable value, and which may indeed become determinative as investigation proceeds further.

(3) Finally, the arguments for immortality may be summed up in the supreme fact that it accords with the spiritualistic, as opposed to the materialistic, conception of construction of the universe. To illustrate: I hold in my hand a book, which consists of covers made of cloth and pasteboard, of leaves of paper, of paragraphs, sentences, clauses and words, with punctuation marks, all printed in ink; all these constitute the *body* of the book, which is visible, palpable, substantial. Yet the real book is the *thought* which it contains, which is *purely spiritual;* and this *soul* of

the book cannot be seen with the eye of flesh, or weighed or measured by any material standards. Even so the real universe, after all, is the spiritual universe; and God and man are living, spiritual, personal beings dwelling within and behind the material forms which constitute what we call the phenomenal universe. Under this conception it is easy to believe in the deathlessness of the spiritual part of man, which is the real man. Such a belief brings order out of chaos in our human world, and makes the Spiritual Providence of time and eternity intelligible, beneficent and hopeful.

What is the value of this great faith? Clearly its value is at least three-fold.

1. It adds dignity and worth to the human soul as nothing else could do. If man is not merely a creature of time and sense, but is truly a spiritual being "made in the image of God" and made for an eternal career, he is at once "crowned with glory and honor." Life instantly takes on a higher significance than any earthly scope can possibly give it; and earthly scenes and experiences derive their chief importance from the fact that they minister to the beginnings of a development of character, through education and discipline, through struggle and sorrow and suffering, through love and joy and holy aspiration, which is to be carried forward in the heavenly world. Surely a being whose life is projected on such a scale, for whose growth, tuition and perfection his earthly years are utterly inadequate, may be truly said to rank "but little lower than the angels." When this exalted conception is once thoroughly grasped, the slave may lift up his head, the criminal may lift up his heart, and the

most wanton prodigal may say in penitence, "I will arise and go to my Father."

2. The thought of immortality, especially as held by those who earnestly believe in the universal Fatherhood of God, affords a comfort in bereavement which it is impossible to obtain from any other source. Hearts that bleed in their grief and pain when death snatches away their dear ones, perhaps in the very beauty of their youth, must suffer indeed even though their faith be strong: what, then, must be their anguish if they "sorrow as those who have *no hope*"? The darkness of the future makes the present desolate, and there is no relief for the lonely, yearning soul save in the conviction

> "That life is ever lord of death,
> And love can never lose its own."

When this conviction becomes intelligent, profound and vitally religious, it has power to sustain the drooping spirits of the saddest mourner, to give him strength and courage to go on, to make him patient, brave and uncomplaining, and to fill him alike with sympathy toward his afflicted fellows and with reverent trust in the Eternal Goodness. The hope of some possible reunion and a conscious companionship in love and joy, somewhere, "behind the veil,"—this hope is indeed "an anchor to the soul, both sure and steadfast." Perhaps no other part of the Christian gospel has been more full of blessing in the past, or is more greatly needed at present.

3. Likewise the faith of immortality has power to inspire to every good word and work in behalf of social improvement. What can adequately inspire thereto except such an estimate of the dignity and worth of human nature as immortality implies, together

with a firm belief that the spiritual gains of the individual and the spiritual increment of the succeeding generations shall be conserved and perpetuated beyond death? To lead cultivated men and women to bind themselves out to the service of the ignorant, the weak, the vile, the criminal members of society, some other motive than pity or self-protection or the interests of future generations is necessary; nothing less than a passionate appreciation of the inherent value of the human soul, begetting a love for the individual as a child of the living God, capable of being redeemed out of all imperfection, has ever been equal to this holy consecration in the past, or seems likely to be equal to it in the future. But the Christian view of human life, carrying the doctrine of immortality, engenders and in every way strengthens such appreciation and love. This in turn gives us the due sense of social responsibility, and prompts us to throw ourselves utterly into the task of helping to work out the full salvation of humanity, here and hereafter. In this worthy task the individual achieves most surely his own best development; and if, having thus lived and served and grown noble, he is lifted at last into the light and joy, the opportunity and activity of a higher and eternal world, what grander outcome, whether personal or social, could be conceived? Thus the thought of immortality, *especially as held by those who believe earnestly in the universal Fatherhood of God,* becomes the greatest spiritual dynamic of a progressive civilization. This is indeed "the power of an endless life."

TRADITIONAL CHRISTIANITY AND ESSENTIAL CHRISTIANITY

"The appealing personality of Christ has been, through all distortions, the regulative power and the source of unity in Christendom; and the more it stands out clear against the sky, with every cloud from behind and from before it swept away, the more single will be our apprehension of the genius of our religion.

"It was the Providence of history that gave us Him: it was the men of history that dressed up the theory of Him: and till we compel the latter to stand aside, and let us through to look upon his living face, we can never seize the permanent essence of the gift."—JAMES MARTINEAU.

Another parable set he before them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man that sowed good seed in his field: but while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares also among the wheat, and went away. But when the blade sprang up and brought forth fruit, then appeared the tares also. And the servants of the householder came and said unto him, Sir, didst thou not sow good seed in thy field? whence then hath it tares? And he said unto them, An enemy hath done this. And the servants say unto him, Wilt thou then that we go and gather them up? But he saith, Nay; lest haply while ye gather up the tares, ye root up the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest: and in the time of the harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather up first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them; but gather the wheat into my barn.—MATT. xiii. 24-30.

TRADITIONAL CHRISTIANITY AND ESSENTIAL CHRISTIANITY

THE present age is emphatically a harvest time in spiritual things. The ripening growths of the long past are being gathered and separated. Truth is being sifted from error, right from wrong, good from evil in more directions and on a larger scale than ever before. It is an era of culmination, in which influences that have been at work for thousands of years are maturing their legitimate results; and since a tree is known by its fruits, the analytical and critical processes of the modern mind are bent upon testing these fruits as thoroughly as possible. This attitude may seem to be skeptical and hostile, but it is really animated by the serious and noble purpose of discovering and liberating the truth, in order that whatever is false may be rejected and no longer darken the minds of men.

There is no realm of our life to-day in which the working of this principle finds, or needs to find, more earnest exemplification than in that of religion. We often complain that there is a great deal of religious indifference abroad, but we need also to remember that there is a great deal of religious inquiry, research and reflection. Never did so many cults and faiths engage attention; never were so many systems of worship and teaching brought forward and held up to the light; and never was the spirit of candor in studying these more widespread, profound and catholic than at the present moment. Men *want* to ascertain the truth

about divine things; they are looking far and near for it; they are hungry for conviction, assurance, certitude: but they are persuaded that no one form of religion has ever contained "the whole truth and nothing but the truth"; and because of the very preciousness of the high spiritual interests involved in the subject, they cannot afford to be uncritical in their testing and sifting of the world's religious products, however sympathetic they may desire to be.

Christianity in particular is undergoing fresh and searching reconsideration to-day. For the Christian religion is deeply implicated in our whole Western civilization, and now that this civilization is on trial for its life, by reason of the gigantic cataclysm which is convulsing Europe, many are impelled to challenge the claims of this religion, to ask what is valid in them, and to scrutinize every argument adduced in their support. Has Christianity been a colossal failure? are the defects of our civilization due to its inefficiency? or has it never been really tried on a sufficient scale to enable us justly to determine its value?

Before we can answer these questions, we must first ascertain *what is essential Christianity*, and then see to what extent it has been rightly understood and fairly promulgated. The broaching of this two-fold query intimates, and it may be unhesitatingly asserted, that much that has come down to us under the sacred name of Christianity is not Christian at all, either in the sense of having been taught by Jesus Christ, or in the sense of being necessarily implied by his actual teaching, or in the sense of being reasonable and true. Jesus himself said, "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven."

Even so we may declare, Not every one who cries "Christ!" "Christianity!" "the Church!" is truly Christian; but he who grasps the central and fundamental truth and spirit of the Gospel, and then tries to live it out sincerely, consistently, and faithfully. If there have been many "false Christs," there have been more false followers of the true Christ. If there has been a sound core of genuine, valid, and holy teaching at the heart of Christianity, there has been built up around it an immense body of spurious doctrine, consisting of myth and legend, fancy and fable, pretension and imposture, as well as a continuous admixture of foreign speculation from the beginning until now. Hence the task which has devolved upon our age, and which has increased in magnitude and thoroughness and value ever since the dawn of the Protestant Reformation, is that of severing truth from error, the kernel from the husk, in historical Christianity. This task, exceedingly important, is still far from accomplishment; but it is in process of being accomplished, in many ways, at many hands, in all branches of the Christian Church, —by patient scholars and thinkers, by humble teachers and preachers, and by a vast multitude of those whose only means of proving what is true and what false is in the great school of experience.

But here we come to definitions and the question of standards. How shall we determine what is essential Christianity? what shall be our standard of measurement? and who shall decide where doctors disagree? The answer is that it is simply a problem for the human mind to grapple with, and on which to employ all its resources; that specifically it is primarily a problem of historical and literary criticism; and that whosoever has any contribution of true knowledge or

valid reasoning or illuminating insight, which may throw the least bit of light upon the problem, is entitled to be heard in seeking its solution. No scholar so humble and none so great, no disciple so inconspicuous and none so prominent, but that he may have part in this great sifting process of our age; and by just this *sifting process*, widespread, thorough, patient, prolonged, we shall come to know the truth, and the truth shall make us free. There is absolutely no other way. No Ecumenical Councils, at the Vatican or elsewhere, no Papal Decrees, and no "Authority" in heaven or on earth can settle such a matter. It is simply a question for learning and thought and the cultivated consciousness of good men and the growing spiritual experience of mankind.

If this statement seems too strong, it at least is not made without due consideration of the opposite contention that the human mind is incompetent to determine divine truth for itself, and therefore needs some superhuman, authoritative teaching and guidance. But if the human mind is not able to determine what is true, how can it determine what is superhuman and authoritative? In the last analysis everything must rest back upon the soul of man, to which truth and right and love and beauty must make their appeal upon their own merit. An authority imposed may compel a certain acquiescence of the will, resulting in submission, obedience, outward compliance; but it cannot gain the inward assent of the reason, the sincere approval of the conscience, the profound sanction of the spirit, and the glad surrender of the affections unless these be freely *won* by the intrinsic excellence of what it offers. The alternative is clear: either there must be freedom, the freedom of the soul to judge for

itself what is true and right, or there must be coercion in one form or another. If a coercive authority be claimed by any individual, official, or institution, who shall validate the claim? Mankind may need some authoritative teaching, but it must be of the sort which is not a substitute for thought, but an aid to thought. There is ultimately no escape from the peril and the glory of bringing every subject to the bar of the human mind and heart for the ascertainment, as far as finite powers of apprehension and comprehension can ascertain, what is true and right and beautiful and good. If we cannot exercise such powers and pass such judgment, we can do nothing but follow as we are led and do in all things as we are told. Is it only for this that the peerless soul of man was made?

As to standards in the solution of our immediate problem, everything is to be brought first of all to the judgment-seat of Christ. That is to say, Jesus Christ, the Founder of Christianity, and universally conceded to be its true Representative, must be our primary and principal Criterion for determining what is essential Christianity. Not what Paul taught, or Peter or James or John, not what the Greek Fathers or the Latin Fathers inculcated, not what the historic Creeds have said or the Church has decided; but rather what Jesus Christ was and said and did, when clearly known and correctly understood,—this is to be regarded as the heart and soul of Christianity, as our true standard of measurement. The two phrases, "Back to Christ" and "the Christianity of Christ," have thus a definite and legitimate meaning; and so our next step is to find out as nearly as possible what the Christianity of Christ was.

Here arises, to be sure, the further question of the

credibility of our sources of information about Christ and his times and his teachings, together with the still further question of correct readings and interpretations. But these collateral issues, though very vital, cannot be properly discussed in the present chapter. Modern historical and biblical scholarship is dealing with them exhaustively, and the reader who desires may find abundant material bearing upon the points thus raised. Suffice it just now to assume the broad fact that the New Testament is our chief source of knowledge regarding Jesus Christ, and to maintain that the substance of the truth which it sets forth regarding him can be fairly grasped by the ordinary enlightened and candid person who is unwarped by prejudicial influences. If this were not so, the task of preaching "the gospel to every creature," the task of making "disciples of all nations," were surely a vain one.

Now the picture which the unbiased reader of the Gospel Narratives obtains of Jesus is that of a noble Teacher, humble, reverent, heavenly-minded, claiming for himself no miraculous birth, no perfection, no infallibility even; going about doing good, inculcating high and holy lessons, instilling the most beautiful and blessed principles of life and conduct ever known among men, and himself exemplifying them with wondrous fidelity and sweetness; calling about him twelve lowly men to be his disciples, companying with them, talking to them, educating them, and exerting his uplifting and sanctifying influence upon them; then, after convincing them that he was the true Messiah, the Christ, and leading them to an earnest acknowledgment of their faith in him as such, dying a cruel death and leaving his sublime cause in their hands, absolutely without any other organization than was naturally im-

plied in their common spiritual experiences and their bond of union with him, their dear Lord and Master.

In his brief public career Jesus performed numerous works of healing—precisely how many, or in what manner, or by what power it is impossible to tell. He showed a compassionate sympathy toward the poor, the unfortunate, and the oppressed, while severely censuring the hard-hearted, the cruel, the unjust, the hypocritical; and he bore himself as a brave Reformer, through his high and searching teaching, with reference to the official abuses connected with religion. He taught the doctrine of God's immanence and Fatherhood, His nearness and dearness, His absolute holiness and love; he set no limits to the doctrine of man's sonship to God, thus logically implying its universality, and further implying the idea of universal human brotherhood; he set forth righteousness as the supreme law of life, and love as its supreme motive; he taught men how to pray, how to trust and obey God, how to imitate and love Him, and how to love and serve one another; he called them to repentance and forgiveness, to simplicity and sincerity, to worship in spirit and truth, and to the innocent joys of a pure and benevolent life; and he pointed the human soul, tenderly and confidently, to the beautiful home in the immortal realms, but without giving particular information, without much argument, without philosophical speculation. He simply affirmed the great cardinal truths of his Message, and left them to make their own impression; but he himself, in his own spirit, conduct and character, was their best exemplification—"he lived the precepts which he taught."

Here, then, we have the gist of the Christianity of Christ,—a religion without priest, ritual, church, or

formal creed; a religion of reverent gratitude, trust and love toward God, and of fraternal respect, sympathy, love and helpfulness toward man; a spiritual religion rather than a ceremonial or institutional or dogmatic religion; a religion of vital, quickening, inspiring and sanctifying power over every soul that ever did really receive it, or that may receive it to-day.

But now this essential Christianity, this Christianity of Christ, soon began to spread abroad, and as soon began to be elaborated and corrupted. It was taken up by the brilliant mind of St. Paul, who modified it in a peculiar and marked way; by the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews, who gave it a somewhat different shape; by the author of the Fourth Gospel and the First Epistle of John, who altered it still further. It came into close and prolonged contact with Greek Philosophy, in its various forms, and with Greek social usages, and was profoundly influenced thereby.[46] From all these and other associations it emerged in the statements of the great historic creeds—the Apostles Creed, the Nicene Creed, and the Athanasian Creed—with a metaphysical character deeply impressed upon it. It was thrown into the turbulent stream of world-politics in the Roman Empire, from which it suffered a pronounced secularization. It was embraced by St. Augustine, who put the stamp of his mighty individuality upon it, with his ideas of a fallen race, a ruined world, and everlasting punishment, and of the Church as a City of Refuge. Then the Roman Catholic Church, rising in splendor, adopted the resulting compound, and carried its elaboration still further in the direction of estab-

[46] See the highly valuable work of the late Prof. Edwin Hatch on this subject, published as "The Hibbert Lectures for 1888."

lishing her ecclesiastical absolutism, and for a thousand years imposed it upon the nations of Europe. Thus the Christianity which has come down to us is not the simple Christianity of Christ, but a complex system of doctrines, partly Judaic, partly Oriental, partly Hellenic, partly Latin, and only partly Christian in any strict sense.

This complex system, which the present chapter calls Traditional Christianity, has contained such features as these:—The doctrine of the immaculate conception; the doctrine of the virgin birth; the doctrine of the deity of Christ; the doctrine of the Trinity; the doctrine of the fall of man in Adam; the doctrine of a time-probation; the doctrine of everlasting punishment; the doctrine of the Devil; the doctrine of purgatory; the doctrine of the sacraments as an indispensable means of Divine grace; the doctrine that the Church is the kingdom of God on earth, and is entitled to rule among men; the doctrine that the Pope is the Vicegerent of Christ, and as such is supernaturally and infallibly guided when acting in an official capacity; prayers to Mary the Mother of Christ, and prayers to the saints; the adoration of relics; and the imposition of fasts, the confessional, and a celibate priesthood. All this, however naturally it may have arisen and however useful it may have been, *is not Christian at all*, either in the sense of having been taught by Jesus Christ or in the sense of being legitimately implied by what he did actually teach. There is scarcely one of all the ideas here stated that can be found, with its customary import at any rate, in the Christianity of Christ as it is expressed in the Sermon on the Mount, the Parables, and the casual and characteristic utterances of the Master. Yet the doctrines or con-

ceptions comprised in this strange compound have really constituted the bulk of the teaching that has passed under the name of Christianity, especially as far as the Roman Catholic Church has been concerned —and it is this great Church mainly that has given shape to our Western religion.

To be sure, this doctrinal system was considerably modified by Protestantism, which rejected in particular about one-half (the second half) of the ideas above enunciated. But the rest of the system remained, and indeed was accentuated by Calvinism, and has furnished until recently the staple upon which the souls of the vast majority of Christians have been fed during nearly all the centuries. While the Roman Catholic Church has been the main channel and the chief purveyor of this whole stream of pseudo-Christianity, it has, nevertheless, flowed far and wide through other channels, and has overspread the world in the great movement of modern foreign missions.

Now it may be a fair question whether this Traditional Christianity has been, on the whole, salutary for the peoples among whom it has been promulgated; it is perhaps sufficient to know that it was probably inevitable under the circumstances; but there can hardly be any question that it has been something very different from the simple, vital, pure, exalted teaching of the holy Founder of our religion. In this connection the words of Professor Hatch, from the work above referred to, are not only pertinent but extremely weighty because of his recognized scholarship and judicial insight. In his Introduction he says:

"It is impossible for any one, whether he be a student of history or no, to fail to notice a difference of both form and content between the Sermon on the

Mount and the Nicene Creed. The Sermon on the Mount is the promulgation of a new law of conduct; it assumes beliefs rather than formulates them; the theological conceptions which underlie it belong to the ethical rather than the speculative side of theology; metaphysics are wholly absent. The Nicene Creed is a statement partly of historical facts and partly of dogmatic inferences; the metaphysical terms which it contains would probably have been unintelligible to the first disciples; ethics have no place in it. The one belongs to a world of Syrian peasants, the other to a world of Greek philosophers.

"The contrast is patent. If any one thinks that it is sufficiently explained by saying that the one is a sermon and the other a creed, it must be pointed out in reply that the question why an ethical sermon stood in the forefront of the teaching of Jesus Christ, and a metaphysical creed in the forefront of the Christianity of the fourth century, is a problem which claims investigation.

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"In investigating this problem, the first point that is obvious to an inquirer is, that the change in the center of gravity from conduct to belief is coincident with the transference of Christianity from a Semitic to a Greek soil. The presumption is that it was the result of Greek influence. It will appear from the Lectures which follow that this presumption is true." [47]

Toward the end of the twelfth chapter, after alluding to another important factor, "the interposition of the State," he says: "The Church became, not an assembly of devout men, grimly earnest about living a

[47] "The Influence of Greek Ideas and Usages Upon the Christian Church," pp. 1 and 2.

holy life—its bishops were statesmen; its officers were men of the world; its members were of the world, basing their conduct on the current maxims of society, held together by the loose bond of a common name, and of a creed which they did not understand. In such a society, an intellectual basis is the only possible basis. In such a society also, in which officialism must necessarily have an important place, the insistence on that intellectual basis comes from the instinct of self-preservation. But it checked the progress of Christianity. Christianity has won no great victories since its basis was changed. The victories that it has won, it has won by preaching, not Greek metaphysics, but the love of God and the love of man." [48]

In conclusion he says: "I have now brought these Lectures to a close. The net result is the introduction into Christianity of the three chief products of the Greek mind—Rhetoric, Logic, and Metaphysics. I venture to claim to have shown that a large part of what are sometimes called Christian doctrines, and many usages which have prevailed and continue to prevail in the Christian Church, are in reality Greek theories and Greek usages changed in form and color by the influence of primitive Christianity, but in their essence Greek still. . . .

"It is an argument for the divine life of Christianity that it has been able to assimilate so much that was at first alien to it. It is an argument for the truth of much of that which has been assimilated, that it has been strong enough to oust many of the earlier elements. But the question which forces itself upon our attention as the phenomena pass before us in review, is the question of the relation of these Greek elements in

[48] *Ibid.*, p. 349.

Christianity to the nature of Christianity itself. The question is vital. Its importance can hardly be overestimated. It claims a foremost place in the consideration of earnest men." [49]

Thus we clearly see that the distinction between Traditional Christianity and essential Christianity is a perfectly valid one. The beautiful teaching of Jesus Christ, which is our standard of measurement in spiritual things, is a far more simple, vital, moral, penetrating, *religious* Message than the elaborate system of Greek and Roman theological, ritualistic and ecclesiastical doctrines prevailing during the long centuries could ever dream of being. The one was indeed a Gospel, a "good tidings of great joy," to comfort and guide and redeem heart-hungry men; the other was a scheme of ideas for intellectual disputants and a philosophical program for the builders of a mighty institutionalism.

But now another aspect of the subject appears. The question obtrudes itself, whether there is any relation between this traditional Christianity, this pseudo-Christianity compounded mostly of Greek speculation and Roman statecraft, and the present frightful upheaval in European society. Before dismissing the suggestion as wholly irrelevant, let us reflect a little.

Jesus Christ was "meek and lowly in heart." He inculcated the great principle of mutual service, cooperation, brotherly love. He said to his disciples, when they were striving about positions of preferment, "Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them. But it shall not be so among you; but whosoever will be great among you, let him

[49] *Ibid.*, pp. 349-351.

be your minister; and whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant."[50] But when we look at Christian history as a whole, instead of seeing this spirit realized and embodied in all the practical affairs of social intercourse, in any particular nation or among the nations generally, we behold for the most part a civilization that has been built up on the basis of power, a civilization whose dream has been dominion, whose spirit has been ambition, and whose method has been competition; and traditional Christianity—institutionalized, ecclesiastical, denominational, dogmatic Christianity—has been shot through and through with the self-same false conception and motive. Hence we have had an age-long cultivation of national patriotism narrowly conceived, racial antipathies, religious bigotries and strifes, and the whole mistaken ideal of the glory of supremacy in Church and State. Because the Christian Church itself has failed so largely to learn and practise the Master's great, simple principle of cooperative good-will, it has not been able to teach it to the nations; and the nations have gone on building up the fabric of power and dominion, each seeking to outstrip the other instead of helping the other, and ever and anon fighting one another instead of serving one another. And now, all of a sudden, the stupendous pile collapses; for what else than a collapse can we call it when a civilization fails to maintain itself in justice, concord and prosperity, and exhausts itself in a universal orgy of destructiveness?

There was the greatest need at the beginning, and it has increased rather than diminished during the centuries, that the European peoples should be deeply imbued with the spirit of the social teaching of Jesus

[50] See Matt. xx:20-28; Mark x:35-45; Luke xxii:24-27.

Christ,—the spirit and principle of mutuality, goodwill, kindliness, friendliness, cooperation. For because of their geographical limitations they were thrown into close contact with one another, and because of their racial differences it was inevitable that misunderstandings and strained relations might easily arise. All these conditions have been aggravated by the increase of population, the multiplication of the means of intercourse, and the stirring of new creative energies in every modern nation. Under such circumstances the only possible way for people to live together is to live in amity and mutual helpfulness; and if the Christian Church could have seen this and taught it and exemplified it, sincerely and faithfully, from first to last, who can doubt that Europe might have been spared a hundred wars and saved from this most recent and most terrible "abomination of desolation"? Jesus wept over Jerusalem, saying, "If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now are they hid from thine eyes."[51] Even so a thoughtful believer in him to-day, contemplating the tragic history of these nineteen centuries, may well mourn over the blindness and fatuousness of so many of his professed followers, over their failure to understand the plain, practical implications of his social Gospel, and over their consequent inability to represent *him* truly before a needy world.

It is a striking fact that in the present dire extremity of Europe the Christian Church is apparently powerless. She lifts no effectual voice to stay the strife; she scarcely even ventures to repeat the Master's word —"Put up again thy sword into its place: for all they

[51] Luke xix:41, 42.

that take the sword shall perish with the sword"; she simply does not count as a factor in the case. Why? Is it partly because her own skirts are not clean, because her own soul has been, all too often, full of the spirit of ambition and strife, because she has loved power and sought dominion, because she has coveted "all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them"? Oh, if the Christian Church could only have taught and practised a purer Christianity, the Christianity of Christ, instead of that divisive traditional Christianity which has so largely usurped its place, how different might have been the history of the last nineteen hundred years!

But of course it is vain to dwell upon what might have been, except for the sake of learning what ought to be now. And it is plain now that if, upon the ruins which the great war leaves in Europe, a new civilization is to be builded, it must be erected upon a new basis, which is yet the old, simple basis of the Gospel of Jesus Christ,—the principle of mutuality, goodwill, brotherly-kindness, cooperation. Else it will not be a new civilization, but a repetition of the age-long story of distrust, dislike, jealousy, bigotry, injustice, cruelty, revenge,—the evil spirit in the heart whence come all fightings in the last analysis. Not ambition, power and dominion, but meekness, love and mutual service,—this is the social genius of the Christianity of Christ; and it will lead as surely to the increased production of wealth, prosperity, peace and happiness as the opposite principle leads to strife. If we are to prosper at all, really and permanently, we must prosper together; and the world has grown at length to be so essentially one, so truly a single great family of nations, feeling its unity, its solidarity, as it never did

before, that this word "together" must henceforth comprise all mankind. Each nation will thrive best, in the long run, where other nations thrive with it—just as a business man whose customers are making money will himself make money by reason of his relations with them. If the people of the United States are to have increasing trade with the people of South America, it is to the interest of the former that the latter should be prosperous. So it is everywhere, when looked at in a large way: the welfare of each is bound up with the welfare of all; cooperation should supersede competition, men should help one another instead of restricting one another. Yet this is only an economic statement of the spiritual truth of brotherly love which Jesus Christ put into the very foundation of his social teaching.

If, then, a new civilization is to be builded and must be builded upon this truly Christian basis, the task of the Christian Church for the new age is perfectly clear: *It must teach men, individually and socially, this great, simple lesson of cooperative goodwill, and must practise that teaching in spirit and in truth.* It must give over all its old dreams of power and dominion and glory; it must no longer seek to rule men or nations, but must seek simply to serve them; and it must instil everywhere, and exemplify always, the love which alone makes mutual helpfulness a holy joy. Upon no other basis can a better human society be established than that which is passing through the agonizing conflicts of the present hour.

It is undoubtedly true that, in the readjustments and reconstructions of the immediate future, the State in every land must bear the brunt of the labor. No longer may it fall to the Church to shape political poli-

cies and practical programmes. But it is the high function of the Church to inculcate ideas and formulate ideals out of which practical measures may grow in due time. The Church can be the Teacher and Helper of the State, the one great, spiritual Ally that can speak and work with the holiest of sanctions. In such a service the Church can be the powerful co-laborer of every other educational agency,—the school, the college, the university, the press; and all working together, they can lead the nations out of darkness into light, out of hatred and strife into love and peace.

But before the Christian Church can well perform her part of this important ministry, she must purify her own message and renew a right spirit within her soul. She must discard some of the hoary errors of traditional Christianity, accumulated by a varied process of accretion during the long centuries, and return to essential Christianity, the Christianity of Jesus Christ; she must begin to heal her own divisions by seeking the deeper unities, "the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace"; and she must pray continually for a humble and a contrite heart, because her own follies and sins are partly responsible for the frightful troubles which are now shaking the earth. With such a purified message and such a chastened spirit, the Christian Church may hope once more to speak truly to a needy world in the name of the crucified Redeemer, and the long-suffering world—weary, bleeding, yearning—will hear and heed and be saved.

Finally, regardless of the European war, the need for such a sifting and cleansing of our inherited religion as is here indicated is rendered more urgent by a certain broad missionary consideration. Christianity is offering itself to the entire world to-day, and

practically the entire world lies open to it. But unless the form of teaching that shall go forth among the nations be purer and truer than that which has prevailed since the second and third centuries, Christianity will not be an unmixed blessing to the various races of the earth. And it might be such a blessing. The Christianity of Christ, disentangled from the pseudo-Christianity of the creeds and the principal churches, would prove indeed a holy inspiration, a baptism of spiritual power, to the burdened souls of men everywhere. The human race in all lands unwittingly waits for its message of light, hungers for its bread of life, longs for the quickening which its simple story is able to impart. But in place of all this the Father's children have been given, mainly, the adulterated mixture which has been herein summarized and characterized under the term "Traditional Christianity." It is impossible to believe that, in this guise, Christianity can continue permanently to win its way. The growing intelligence of mankind will either purify it or reject it.

Therefore no service which the true friends of Christianity and humanity can perform at the present time can be more fraught with spiritual blessing, in the long run, than that of thoroughly purging traditional Christianity, eliminating historic corruptions, and thus releasing essential Christianity, the Christianity of Christ, for its beautiful mission among the nations. Let the tares be separated from the wheat before the harvest shall be reaped and threshed out, to be again sown broadcast in the fair fields of the whole wide world! Then shall Jesus Christ, with his simple and heavenly Gospel, really come in power and great glory; and before him shall be gathered all nations, and from him they shall receive, in deed and in truth, "the words of eternal life"!

CHRISTIANITY AND DEMOCRACY

"*Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good-will toward men.*"—Luke ii. 14.

"*Whosoever would become great among you, shall be your minister; and whosoever would be first among you shall be your servant.*"—Matt. xx. 27.

"*For ye, brethren, were called for freedom; only use not your freedom for an occasion to the flesh, but through love be servants one to another.*"—Gal. v. 13.

"*She (the Church) should frankly recognize that democracy paves the way to what is precisely the highest expression of her catholicism. When she does so, then democracy will begin to yearn after the Church which continues that Gospel-message wherein democracy finds its own remote but authentic origin.*"—"The Programme of Modernism," p. 129.

"*The Church will not shape political platforms nor formulate economic programmes. But she will bring her thought and her catechism to bear upon the work of so tempering the wills of men that they shall be heroic and great-hearted citizens of the free commonwealth.*"—Professor Henry S. Nash.

CHRISTIANITY AND DEMOCRACY

THESE brief quotations epitomize some of the principal truths which lie at the heart of Christianity and democracy. The joyful recognition of God over all; peace and good-will among men; the greatness of mutual service rather than of power and dominion; the privileges and responsibilities of freedom; love as the chief motive in social conduct; and the building of strong characters that shall invest their virtues in the efficient maintenance of a free and just State,—these are cardinal conceptions of the Christian religion as it is working out amid the ideals of modern democratic institutions; and they imply the profound truth that Christianity and democracy are but two phases of one vast movement in human life which means welfare alike for the individual and for society, on both the spiritual side and the material side. This essential unity is not always understood, either by churchmen or by statesmen; but its due appreciation will reconcile many conflicting aims, will give sacred meanings to a multitude of ordinary labors, and will enlarge our hopeful outlook for the continued progress of mankind.

It is a fact that Christianity deals mainly with spiritual concerns. It regards man primarily as a spiritual being, a child of the Eternal Father, and therefore an heir of immortality. It contemplates all his interests from this high vantage-ground, and guages the accidents and incidents of time and circumstance by the scale of infinity, seeing them in the broad sweep

of a process of development that is not wholly confined to this world. Accordingly it lays chief emphasis upon the things that endure, the things of abiding worth, and attaches less value to those things which perish with the using. It exalts true principles, pure motives, holy ideals, and that inner knowledge and love of divine truth, that harmony of soul with the Spirit of the living God, which Jesus called "eternal life,"—beginning here, but lasting forever.

But true Christianity approaches man as a being on earth, amid earthly conditions and sustaining earthly relationships. He is born here, he dwells here at least for a time, and here must be the first sphere of his activities and attainments. In the concrete affairs of every-day life in this world—in the relationships of the family, the community, the nation; in marrying and begetting, in buying and selling, in commanding and serving; and amid toil, poverty, suffering and sin, disease and vice and crime; in the face of calamities and social tumults and the mystery of death—in the midst of all these we live, and must learn, and must remember that we are children of God and brothers one of another. Such was the point of view and the constant teaching of Jesus Christ. If his professed followers have sometimes forgotten this fact, and have made his religion excessively other-worldly, and have imposed upon its devotees requirements which he never dreamed of, "teaching for doctrines the commandments of men," it has not been his fault. He himself was always perfectly sane, perfectly human, perfectly practical. His Gospel was a message of glad tidings with reference not only to the future life, but primarily and profoundly to the present life.

On the other hand, democracy has to do mostly with

temporal affairs. It occupies itself mainly with earthly interests. It is primarily secular in its aims and methods. It seeks the well-being of the individual and of society here in this world, without much thought of anything lying beyond; and while it is reverent toward the idea of a Supreme Ruler of the universe, it does not necessarily imply this—it is conceivable that democracy might exist and be highly efficient without such a conception. Conversely it is entirely possible for men to believe in God with sincerity and with a vengeance, and yet maintain an aristocracy or an oligarchy of a cruel tyranny—alas! how often in history has such been the case!

Still it is true that democracy is naturally favorable to all spiritual interests,—to education, art, culture, philanthropy, religion, and universal good-will. Whether we regard it as a frame of government or a state of mind, a mechanism of social order or a disposition of the thoughts of many hearts, it is instinctively the friend of every generous impulse, every liberal policy, every high aim, the development of every noble capacity or power in human nature. Therefore democracy is not repressive, but stimulative; it does not discourage effort, but encourages it,—encourages thought, research, experiment, the bold initiative of the individual, the new cooperation of the social group. Consequently under its ample ægis there is an upspringing of a great variety of voluntary activities which result in strengthening or refining the human mind, and in fertilizing civilization with increasing learning, skill, beauty, benevolence, and virtue. Simply by affording the natural man scope to work out the latent good that is in him, democracy becomes the promoter of his welfare and progress by as much as it lies within him

to advance himself; and to one who believes in the dignity and high potentiality of human nature, rather than in its total depravity, democracy becomes a synonym of hope for the slow but sure elevation of the race.

This agreement between Christianity and democracy will appear more clearly if we analyze a little further the real objects of each. What is it that Christianity, the Christianity of Christ, seeks for man? and what does democracy seek for him? A brief but plain answer will be helpful.

It is commonly taught that the grand object of Christianity is "the salvation of souls"; and it is commonly thought that such salvation means, not merely deliverance from the power of sin, but rescue from the control of the Devil and the terrors of a future hell, and the securing of an abundant entrance into heaven. Although there is some truth in this form of statement, there is a much better way of putting the case. True Christianity, the Christianity of Christ, seeks the welfare of man as a spiritual being, the child of the Eternal God. Therefore it seeks his growth or development or cultivation or education or discipline in the following principal qualities:

Reverence, gratitude, trust and love toward God; consideration, honesty, sympathy, love and helpfulness toward man; purity of heart, integrity of character, freedom of spirit; and that social harmony, prosperity and happiness which grow out of peace and good-will. To realize these qualities is to be "saved," *i. e.*, to be "made whole," and is the truest preparation for heaven, while establishing the kingdom of heaven on earth.

Likewise the grand object of democracy is the individual and social welfare, but somewhat more narrowly

conceived, as relating mainly to earthly interests. True democracy seeks principally the maintenance of these great elements of such welfare:

Order, justice, liberty; and it believes that, with these, men will exercise intelligence and virtue and some benevolence, and will achieve prosperity and happiness. It trusts generously in the native capacity and ability of the individual to do for himself, to take care of himself and those dependent upon him, to direct and govern himself with increasing wisdom, honor toward others, and regard for the common weal; and it leaves him entirely free to pursue such forms of culture and pleasure and religion as he may see fit, only insuring that he do not abridge the corresponding rights of his fellow men.

We may sum up these two statements by saying that Christianity seeks to establish among men Reverence, Love, Righteousness, Freedom, Peace; while democracy seeks to establish Order, Justice, Freedom, leaving other things to spring up as they may.

Thus it appears that the two qualities or principles here belonging *in common* to Christianity and democracy are Righteousness and Freedom, or Justice and Freedom, meaning the same. Christianity seeks to establish among men righteousness and freedom; democracy seeks to establish among men justice and freedom. Christianity adds reverence, love and peace; democracy adds social order. Hence it is clear that, *as far as it goes,* democracy is in profound harmony with Christianity; only that Christianity goes farther, includes more, seeks more, means more. But both grow out of our common human nature, both recognize the inherent worth and ability of man, and both aim to help man climb up to the noblest heights of attainment that

may be possible to him.

But here we must be reminded that Christianity works chiefly within, while democracy works chiefly without. The one quickens, inspires, invigorates, cheers, comforts, reproves, corrects, cleanses, and sanctifies the inner life of the human soul, and so sets it free from imperfection and wrong desire and evil purpose, and makes it resolute to do right, to seek good, to obey the will of God. The other affords protection, opportunity, scope and encouragement for the outward exercise of man's powers, and so opens the way for his tendencies to work themselves out, for his talents to increase themselves, for his nature to flourish and grow and bear fruit. Both give freedom: but the freedom of the one is inner, vital, spiritual; while that of the other is external, social, legal: and yet both kinds of freedom are necessary. Likewise both Christianity and democracy establish righteousness: but the righteousness of the former is that of a soul inwardly set to love and do the right of its own free will and accord; while that of the latter is often obliged to be content with external constraints, restraints, and conformity to the decrees of organized society: and yet both kinds of righteousness are necessary.

From all this it is evident that Christianity and democracy belong together, and are needed to work together in this world. True Christianity is democratic in the most thorough sense of the term; and true democracy, as far as it goes, is in fundamental accord with Christianity's estimate of man, its service of him, and its hope for him. Therefore the sincere believer in democracy is imbued with a religious spirit, and sympathizes with the words of Whittier in which he personifies and addresses this Angel of liberty and love:

"Bearer of Freedom's holy light,
Breaker of Slavery's chain and rod,
The foe of all which pains the sight,
Or wounds the generous ear of God!

"Beautiful yet thy temples rise,
Though there profaning gifts are thrown;
And fires unkindled of the skies
Are glaring round thy altar-stone.

* * * * * * *

"The generous feeling, pure and warm,
Which owns the rights of *all* divine,—
The pitying heart—the helping arm,—
The prompt self-sacrifice,—are thine.

"Beneath thy broad, impartial eye,
How fade the lines of caste and birth!
How equal in their suffering lie
The groaning multitudes of earth!

* * * * * * *

"By misery unrepelled, unawed
By pomp or power, thou seest a MAN
In prince or peasant,—slave or lord,—
Pale priest, or swarthy artisan.

"Through all disguise, form, place, or name,
Beneath the flaunting robes of sin,
Through poverty and squalid shame,
Thou lookest on *the man* within;

"On man, as man, retaining yet,
Howe'er debased, and soiled, and dim,
The crown upon his forehead set,—
The immortal gift of God to him."

"Therefore, too, Christianity, true Christianity, is the friend and ally of democracy. It believes in democracy because it believes in man; it believes in liberty because it believes that, given a fair chance, the good in man will mount to supremacy over evil and will lift him to a worthy life. It trusts man to think for himself because it believes that he can find the truth for himself, can know the truth, will love the truth, and

in time will be won to obey the truth. It gives man a large opportunity for independent action because it believes that only so can he develop the latent good that lies within him; and its restraints would be reserved for the wanton and powerful wrongdoer. It bids every man remember that he is a child of God, and therefore to lift up his heart, to stand upon his feet, and to walk uprightly.

Now if the foregoing considerations and reasonings are valid, a few important deductions follow:

1. Those types of Christianity, those forms of Christian administration, which are not in sympathy with democracy, which distrust man and discourage liberty, *are not truly Christian.* Such preeminently (one is compelled regretfully to say it) is Roman Catholicism, whose authoritative deliverances against freedom have been prominently before the world since the condemnation of "Americanism" by Pope Leo XIII and the more severe condemnation of "Modernism" by Pope Pius X. Without lengthy argument, the following paragraph from Professor Walter Rauschenbusch's "Christianity and the Social Crisis" bears upon the point very forcibly:

"The Catholic Church by its organization tends to keep alive and active the despotic spirit of decadent Roman civilization in which it originated. Even today, when the current of democracy is flowing so powerfully through the modern world, the Roman Church has a persistent affinity for the monarchical principle and an instinctive distrust of democracy. The chronic difficulty encountered by the Latin nations of Southern Europe and Southern America in making free institutions work, is probably not due to any inefficiency of blood or race, but partly to clerical interference with

government, and partly to the anti-democratic spirit constantly flowing out from the Roman Church into the national life of the peoples under her control. If we ask why the Church failed to reorganize society on a basis of liberty and equality, we have here one of the most important answers." [52]

To be out of sympathy with democracy is to be out of sympathy with the deepest and strongest social aspiration of the present age. This aspiration is manifesting itself, indeed, in various and often-seemingly contradictory outward forms, called by different names, such as Socialism, Collectivism, Communism, Nationalism, Trade Unionism, Cooperation, Social Democracy, Republicanism, Feminism, Nihilism, Anarchism, and what not; but, back of them all, the inner, vital spirit of humanity to-day, in every progressive section of the world, is a mighty longing for social betterment. It may seem selfish, gross, materialistic, and doubtless frequently is so; but it is sincere and earnest, and contains the promise and potency of a higher civilization for uncounted millions of mankind. It is the one great hopeful fact among a thousand dismal facts in our struggling, suffering world. The hearts of men everywhere are yearning for a freer, richer, happier life: this is the secret force underneath our social unrest, our agitations, our denunciations of the existing *régime*, even our violence. With increasing intelligence it becomes plain that a better life for the multitudes is *possible;* then the conscience feels that it *ought* to be realized; and then the resources and forces of humanity begin to be mobilized to fight for such a realization. We are in the midst of this manifold and tremendous process, the essential

[52] Work cited, p. 192.

nature of which is the uplook and uplift of the whole race.

To be out of touch with such a vast movement, to antagonize it, to misunderstand it even is to be un-Christian; for Christianity is profoundly humanitarian, seeking the welfare of mankind, the salvation of the individual and of society, which certainly means fulness of life—health, freedom, comfort, intelligence, virtue, happiness—for all God's children. To be so blinded by the interests of an established order, either of thought or of administration,—in other words, to be so absorbed in maintaining an existing traditionalism,—as to miss or misread the workings of the Divine Spirit in the souls of men, even when they are numbered by tens of thousands,—what is all this but to be like those rulers in Jerusalem who rejected Jesus and caused him to lament against the Holy City in the sad words of his terrible indictment, "thou knewest not the time of thy visitation"? Yet such, unfortunately, is the attitude of official Roman Catholicism, as indicated by its almost savage hostility to Modernism. It professes to be the only true Representative of the Divine Government on earth, the only true Guardian and Guide of the human soul: yet it fails to recognize the voice of God in the voice of the people, or to feel the prompting of the Divine Spirit in the world-wide aspiration of the human spirit. It denounces Socialism and Democracy equally, and Modernism seems especially hateful to it because it shares the same secret motive, the same informing, liberalizing purpose, and is the latest expression of a fearless, progressive mind within the Roman Church itself. But in fact Socialism, Democracy and Modernism are nearer to the Christianity of Jesus Christ than this

kind of official Roman Catholicism can possibly be; and the truth which lies at the heart of these three manifestations of human aspiration will as surely prevail over this type of Catholicism as the light of knowledge must ultimately prevail over the darkness of ignorance. The power of an enlightened and free religious faith, coupled with that of a just and liberal social order, will overcome the obstruction offered by the enormous framework of inherited Medievalism; and thus the way will be prepared for the spiritual teaching of Jesus, in conjunction with popular government, to accomplish the social development for which the world waits.

2. Christianity and democracy, by working together, can build up a true kingdom of heaven on earth; but neither can do it alone. There is slight ground for believing in the power of democracy *single-handed* to redeem society; nor is it easy to see how Christianity can make full proof of its ministry without producing eventually a democratic society as a means of realizing some of its noblest ends. But it is entirely probable that Christianity, working (so to speak) on the inside of man, and true democracy, working on the outside, can and will help men to live like true sons of God, and can and will transform this world into a veritable paradise.

Christianity, whatever else or more it may be, is essentially *a spirit of life*,—reverent, believing, hopeful, loving. When the human soul is quickened by this spirit, for which it has a natural affinity, it awakes to new activities and experiences a new expansion. Thought increases, aspiration ensues, knowledge grows, endeavor is heightened and enlarged, and the whole inner world of the spiritual interests and affections is

enriched. The truth which is presented in the life and teaching of Jesus Christ is thus germinal, and when it is planted in the mind and heart of man, it springs up and bears fruit, if not unhappily destroyed by overpowering adverse influences. This is the perpetual miracle of Christian history,—the spiritual quickening into newness of life of dull and perverse human souls. It is like the vitalizing and fructifying of a soggy soil by sowing into it the seeds of those grains or grasses which possess the power of lightening and fertilizing the ground even while they grow. When once "the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus" really impregnates the soul of a man, it not only makes him that he shall be neither barren nor unfruitful, but it continually increases his productive capacity in all good things. So Christianity makes its appeal primarily to the inner life rather than to the outward; it addresses its truth to the mind and heart of the individual, to the inmost soul; and it trusts implicitly that its holy seed, implanted thus, will sometime germinate and come to fruitage because the spiritual forces of God's world are its natural allies.

But then the quickened, expanding soul begins immediately to make over its external organism, to build more stately mansions for itself. The changing, improving inner life incarnates itself in a better and still better outward order. A purified soul wants a purified abode; a refined soul demands refined surroundings; an honest man will have an honest social order in so far as he can bring it about. Inevitably, therefore, the good life within works outward; and a man who has caught the divine vision and the divine purpose will not fail nor be discouraged till he has set justice in the earth. Hence it comes to pass that mankind is

forever reconstructing its external institutions—its creeds, philosophies, philanthropies and governments, whether secular or sacred—in accordance with its progressive inner conceptions and convictions. A man with a Christian mind and heart cannot sit down and sit still in an un-Christian world, a world full of injustice, impurity, ignorance, disease and needless misery: he simply *must* rise up and help make things over, until the outward order shall reasonably harmonize with the inner ideal.

Now if Christianity may be said to represent the inner, spiritual half of this great process of human development, surely democracy may be fairly claimed to represent—as well at least as any word or movement which our age affords—the external, social half of it. We may confidently believe that *together*, while neither can do it alone, they can and will establish the reign of a true, universal human brotherhood. Democracy is the free soul in action, seeking its own welfare, and leading to cooperation with other free souls because the true welfare of one man is essentially the true welfare of all men. Such voluntary cooperation becomes the means by which the external order of society is made over, trusting implicitly to the inherent potency of truth and right to persuade people. Critics of the democratic movement allege that the freedom which it involves is prone to end in license, wantonness, rampage, destructiveness; and this is always a possibility, even a liability; but it is not necessarily or generally a probability. Such critics forget that freedom is a two-edged sword, cutting both ways: if sometimes it takes the form of crass individualism, undue self-assertion, and the disregard of the rights of others; on the other hand it just as naturally and

surely takes the form of enlightened association, mutual endeavor, and the combining of the forces and resources of many for the common good. It is a pure assumption that men will *not*, ordinarily, seek their common weal by common effort. Precisely such a uniting of brains and hearts and hands is what society is continually exhibiting in a thousand forms of association,—in business, in philanthropy, in religion, in politics; and everywhere such associated action tends to move from the lower plane to the higher, and from the lesser interest to the greater; in other words, social life broadens and heightens with the progress of enlightenment and freedom. Democracy is thus the great open field for social achievement, offering scope for all intelligent and virtuous endeavor, alike for the individual and the group. It is not, therefore, destructive, as many suppose, but rather constructive; and especially does it subserve the welfare of mankind when vast numbers of individual men and women have been quickened by the spirit and inspired by the principles and ideals of true Christianity to "seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness," and are then led into various forms of cooperation to establish a better social order. Such a blending of Christianity and democracy seems to be the one great, bright hope of the world. Only the beginnings of this fine blending have as yet been made, on a large scale, but they afford the promise of glorious advances in the near future.

3. The goal which Christianity and democracy thus contemplate is the reign of truth, righteousness, liberty and love among men; which will bring reverence, peace, good-will, brotherhood; which will bring also, and just as surely, health, intelligence, wealth, leisure,

beauty and happiness for all. Nothing short of so comprehensive a good can satisfy the demands of humanity. This earth ought to be a paradise; it is full of riches and untold possibilities; and if we believe in the God and Father whom Jesus proclaimed, we must believe that He intended it to be a blessed though temporary home for His children in the flesh—only He appears to have left to them the task, the honor, and the joy of making it into a paradise, thereby becoming colaborers with Him in finishing this part of His creation. When men shall clearly perceive that this *is* their task, their great mission, to be fellow-workers with one another and with God in carrying the creative processes up and onward to the production of all needed wealth, health, knowledge, beauty, love, and happiness; and when they shall begin to devote themselves to this great object as ardently as in former times they have sought to build up a mighty ecclesiasticism here, or to secure "an abundant entrance" into the celestial city beyond, we shall then begin to realize the passionate dream of the ages and to fulfil the purpose for which the Savior of the world was born. Slowly we must learn how to do this; slowly and patiently we must stumble on, through blundering and suffering, into the light of knowledge, into an understanding of justice, into wisdom and order and liberty, and into all spiritual blessedness and peace; and we must know from first to last that God calls us, His children, of every nation and kindred and tongue, to share with one another and with Him the ineffable joy of establishing here on earth a divine order of life for the entire race. Every Church that has a word of sympathy and encouragement for struggling humanity should lend its generous aid to

all such holy aspiration and endeavor. Never did a worthier ideal dawn upon the mind of man, or a worthier cause engage his heart. Let the inspiration of the purest religion he has ever known give him hope and strength and all kindly counsel as he seeks to incarnate in the concrete affairs of the social order the heavenly vision that glorifies his soul.

We have had in the past, mainly, a Christianity that has been molded upon the ideals of monarchy. The world has been full of monarchical forms of government, full of the names and deeds of lords and kings, princes and potentates, mighty conquerors and august emperors. Inevitably the spirit of all this has influenced the Christian religion and its institutions quite as much as these have influenced the course of civilization. Only recently has democracy been sufficiently developed to be able to react with any considerable power upon Christianity; and at the present moment it is in greater peril than ever before, in peril for its very existence. If, happily, it shall survive—Heaven grant that it may!—the ordeal of the all-but-universal European war, it will arise somehow, sometime, with new vitality for its unfinished, stupendous task of making the social order of the world one of equity and freedom; and an important part of this task will be to instil its true spirit into Christianity and the Christian Church. When this great work shall be carried much farther than it has yet been, when Christianity and its institutions shall be thoroughly democratized, and democracy itself shall be thoroughly Christianized, there will come the era of blessedness for which the weary world has waited and prayed so long. A purified Christianity and a spiritualized democracy will point the way to peace through liberty and love.


ARTI & VERITATI